Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) of Your Breast

This information will get you ready for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of your breast.

An MRI is a test that uses strong magnetic fields to produce pictures of the inside of your body. It’s used to see the type, size, and location of tumors. An MRI of your breast may also be used to check your response to certain treatments and to evaluate breast implants.

If you have any of the devices listed below, call 646-227-2323. It may not be safe for you to have an MRI.

- Pacemaker
- Automatic implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (AICD)
- Breast tissue expander
- Aneurysm clip

If an MRI is not safe for you, your doctor will order a different test. If you have any other questions about your MRI, call your doctor’s office.

Before Your MRI

Preparing for your MRI

- If you have a medical implant or device, ask the doctor who put it in for the exact name and manufacturer. If you don’t have this information before your MRI, you may not be able to have it that day. If you have a breast tissue
expander in place, you may not be able to have the MRI.

- During your MRI, you will lie on your stomach with your hands above your head for about 1 hour. Your breasts will fit into cushioned holes in the table. If you think you will be uncomfortable lying still or if you’re afraid of being in a narrow or small space, talk with your doctor or nurse ahead of time. They may prescribe medication to help you feel more comfortable.

- If you wear a medication patch on your skin, you may need to remove it before your MRI. This is because metal in the patch may heat up during your MRI and cause burns. Make sure you have an extra medication patch with you to apply after your MRI.

**Practice relaxation exercises**

The MRI machine makes loud noises during the scan. This video shows relaxation exercises you can practice before your MRI. You can do these exercises during your scan to feel more comfortable.

Please visit [www.mskcc.org/pe/relaxation_mri](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/relaxation_mri) to watch this video.

**Contrast dye for your MRI**

You may need to have contrast dye on the day of your MRI to help us get a clearer image. Your doctor or nurse will tell you if you will have this done.

Contrast is a special dye that makes it easier for your doctor to see differences in your internal organs. Depending on the reason for your MRI and which part of your body is being scanned, your doctor may want you to have your MRI with contrast. If your doctor ordered an MRI with intravenous (IV) contrast, the contrast material will be injected into a vein in your arm or hand.

If you’ve had a reaction to contrast in the past, tell your doctor or nurse.

**Breastfeeding**

Your doctor or nurse will ask you if you’re pregnant or think you might become pregnant.

It’s safe to receive contrast while breastfeeding. Some people choose not to
breastfeed for 24 hours after receiving MRI contrast. If you’re breastfeeding, talk to your doctor about your options.

The Day of Your MRI

Things to remember

- Refer to the printed reminder you received from your doctor’s office for the time and location of your MRI.
- If you wear a medication patch on your skin, bring an extra one with you.
- If your doctor prescribed medication to help you relax during your MRI, take it 30 to 60 minutes before your MRI.

What to expect

You will change into a hospital gown before going into the scanning area. For safety reasons, you will place your clothing, credit cards, and any objects (such as your phone, jewelry, coins, and glasses), in a locker. This is because objects with even a small amount of metal can fly into the magnet, and the magnet can damage mobile phones and credit cards.

Your technologist will bring you to the scanning room and help you onto the MRI table. The MRI machine is a large, donut-shaped magnet. It makes a loud tapping noise during the scan. Your technologist will offer you earplugs or earphones to listen to music. You will lie face down on your stomach with your hands above your head. Your breasts will fit into cushioned holes in the table.

Once you are comfortable on the MRI table, your technologist will slide it into the magnetic part of the machine and begin the scan. You will be able to speak with your technologist during the entire scan.

It’s important to lie still and breathe normally during the scan. You may want to do your relaxation exercises during your MRI.

Your MRI will take 30 to 60 minutes.
After Your MRI

- When your MRI is finished, you will be helped off the table. After you get your belongings, you can leave.

- There are no restrictions after your MRI and no special care is needed.

- Your radiologist will send a report of your scan to your doctor. Your doctor will use the results of your MRI to help plan your care.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns, please call 646-888-5314. You can reach a staff member Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. After 5:00 PM, during the weekend, and on holidays, please call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.