

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Breast MRI

What is MRI of the breast?

MRI is a diagnostic test to view your breasts without using x-rays. Magnetic fields and radiowaves are used with a computer programme to build up a number of detailed images of the breasts.

Breast MRI only takes pictures of the breasts.

When is breast MRI used?

MRI of the breast is used for a number of reasons. It is not a replacement for mammograms (breast x-rays) or ultrasound; it is used to provide extra information about your breasts.

Breast MRI is used:

- To provide additional screening for some women who have an increased risk breast cancer.
- To investigate abnormalities detected by mammograms and ultrasound.
- To assess the extent of a diagnosed cancer prior to planning treatment.
- To measure the effect of chemotherapy on breast cancers.
- To check the condition of breast implants.

Essential information

Because of the powerful magnets used in MRI scanning, it is not a suitable test for some people.

Before the MRI the radiographer will go through a safety checklist with you.

It is very important that you tell us if you have any of the following:

1. Any form of surgical implant that contains metal, including pacemakers, breast tissue expanders, cochlear implants, internal electronic devices, artificial heart valves, and clips on arteries following brain surgery.
2. Clips are often used in breast imaging to mark an area in the breast at the time of a biopsy. If you have one of these clips in your breast, please tell us. It is unlikely to prevent you from having your MRI and it will not interfere with the breast MRI images.

If any of the above applies to you we may have to defer your MRI until we can get more information about your medical history.

What happens when I arrive?

- You will be met by the MRI radiographic assistant who will check your personal details and go through the MRI safety form.
- The radiographic assistant will explain the procedure to you - please feel free to ask any questions at this time.
- You will be asked to undress and change into a gown - a locker will be provided for your valuables and your clothes.
- It is very important that you do not take anything containing metal into the scanning room.

Please leave all jewellery, credit cards, piercings, watches, mobile phones, and any other metal objects in the locker provided. Gold wedding bands will not affect the scanner.

What happens during the scan?

- Breast MRI uses a special dye called a contrast medium, which helps us to take detailed pictures of the breast - this contrast medium is called gadolinium-DTPA.
- The contrast medium is injected into a vein via a small cannula, which the radiographer will place in your arm before you go into the scan room.
- You will be asked to lie on your front on the MRI couch.
- The radiographer will place your breasts through two holes in the couch - please let us know if you are not comfortable as it is important that you lie absolutely still.
- The couch then slowly slides through the MRI scanner and the images are taken.
- The radiographer operates the MRI scanner from behind a glass partition - she will be able to see you throughout the procedure and you will be able to talk to each other through an intercom in the MRI scanner.

MRI for breast implants is done without any injection.

How long does a breast MRI take?

The procedure takes approximately 30 minutes. You should allow 1½ hours for the appointment.

Can I eat and drink on the day of the MRI scan?

You should eat and drink as normal. Please also take all your medication as you normally would.

Does having a breast MRI hurt?

- MRI scans do not hurt.

- Some women may find the injection uncomfortable - it is also normal to feel a cool sensation when the injection is given.
- Some women may find lying on their front uncomfortable.

I have heard MRI scans are noisy - is this true?

The action of the large magnet in the MRI makes a knocking or drumming noise. This is perfectly normal. You will be given headphones to reduce this noise, but you will still be able to hear what the radiographer says.

We can play a radio channel through these headphones if needed.

Can I have a breast MRI if I am pregnant?

- MRI is not advised in the first three months of pregnancy.
- Pregnancy at any stage makes the MRI pictures much more difficult to read; therefore, we will not take a breast screening MRI if you are pregnant.
- Breastfeeding can also make the MRI pictures difficult to read, so we will not take a breast screening MRI if you are breastfeeding.
- It is very important that you tell the radiographer if you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant.

How will I get my results?

- Your results will be posted to you approximately two weeks following your breast-screening MRI.
- If your breast MRI is part of a series of tests requested by a doctor at the symptomatic breast clinic, your results will be sent to the doctor who made the original request for the MRI; you will then be given an appointment to get these results.
- It is not unusual to need further investigation of the breast following the MRI.

One in 10 women who have a breast MRI will be called back for further appointments. However, in most cases, no problems are found.

Are there any side effects?

There are no after-effects from the MRI scan itself, and you will be free to drive and return to work should you wish.

In very rare cases, some women can have an allergic reaction to the contrast medium used in breast MRI. The radiographers are all trained to deal with such reactions.

Contact number:

MRI reception/appointments - telephone 01623 622515, extension 6190.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

To be completed by the Communications office
Leaflet code: PIL202503-05-BMRI
Created: June 2017 / Revised: March 2025 / Review
Date: March 2027