



## Diagnostic Imaging

# MRI – Magnetic Resonance Imaging

### Introduction

Your Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan will be carried out in the Diagnostic Imaging (x-ray) Department at Dorset County Hospital. Please use South Wing Entrance 1.

Please read this leaflet carefully. It will explain what will happen and why, and we hope it will answer some of the questions you may have. If you do have any further questions upon reading this leaflet, please feel free to contact us.

### What is an MRI scan?

MRI uses a very strong magnetic field and radio waves to create detailed pictures of tissues, organs and other structures inside your body. In many situations MRI provides unique information which can help your doctor to diagnose certain conditions or illnesses and plan your treatment.

### Who can have an MRI scan?

Not everyone can have an MRI scan. As the magnetic field attracts metal objects it may not be possible, or safe, to have an MRI scan. The enclosed safety information leaflet contains all the details.

If you have a **plaster cast** on your wrist please contact the MRI Department on 01305 255397 and discuss with a member of staff.

### Are there any alternatives?

Other tests that do not involve magnetic fields include:

- CT scans (A special type of x-ray that takes 3-dimensional pictures)
- Ultrasound scans (involves the use of sound waves to create images).

Your doctor will be happy to discuss any alternative tests or procedures if they are applicable to you.

### How is the MRI scan done?

The radiographer will ask you to lie on the scanner table which moves inside a large tubular machine. The scanner is open at both ends, is well lit and has a fan which gently blows fresh air over you. The radiographer who performs the scan will be able to see you at all times and can talk to you through an intercom. You will be given a buzzer to use if you need to alert staff during the scan. It is very important that you are comfortable and remain still as any movement can spoil the images. Staff will do their best to make you feel settled, secure and relaxed while you are in the scanner. You will hear loud knocking noises while the scanner is taking pictures, but you will be given protective headphones. During some scans music can be played to you through these. When the scan is over the table is moved back out from the scanner.

## **How long does it take?**

Most MRI scans take between 15 – 60 minutes. However, your appointment time may be longer as we need to complete some preparation prior to the scan

## **The day of the examination**

Please follow the instructions on your appointment letter. Please arrive in good time for your examination and be aware that the car park can be busy at times. For some examinations you may be asked to arrive earlier than your appointment time in order to have a special drink which helps highlight the pictures.

## **How do I prepare for the scan?**

MRI scans are routinely performed as an outpatient procedure. You can eat and drink as normal prior to your scan unless you have been informed otherwise in your appointment letter.

Before your appointment, make sure that all body piercings have been removed and try to leave jewellery at home (wedding rings do not have to be removed).

Please do not wear heavy make-up or metallic nail varnish as you may be asked to remove it.

If you suffer badly from claustrophobia and are anxious, you could ask your doctor to prescribe a sedative (if appropriate).

On arrival you will be asked a series of questions on a safety questionnaire to find out if you have any metal on or in your body, consent to the scan and are safe to enter the MRI scan room. Then, for your comfort and safety, you will be asked to change into a hospital gown. Further information regarding this is available on the MRI waiting area noticeboard.

Before entering the scan room, you will be asked to remove your jewellery, piercings (not wedding rings), keys, coins, credit cards and other personal items, and place them in a basket. There are lockers available, if requested.

Just prior to entering the scan room, the MRI Radiographer will confirm the safety checklist with you and that all metal is removed.

## **Will I need to have an injection?**

About 10% of patients may need to have an injection as part of the scan. This injection will highlight the pictures even more and help the doctors with the diagnosis.

The injection is very safe, but a small number of patients may experience a reaction such as nausea, which staff are trained to deal with. This will be explained fully at the time.

## **When do I get the results?**

Your MRI scan will be reported on by a Diagnostic Imaging specialist – e.g. Radiologist or Reporting Radiographer.

The report will be issued to your referring General Practitioner or Consultant team who will inform you of the next steps in your care pathway.

The availability of the report can vary depending on the type and complexity of the imaging examination.

## Please note

If you are running late, please contact the MRI department. If you are late for your scan, your appointment may be delayed or re-booked.

Please do not bring young children with you as we cannot take responsibility for them whilst you are having your scan.

The MRI department also scans emergency patients from the wards. These patients will take priority and could delay your scan. The radiographer will inform you of any delays.

## Finally

We hope that you have found this leaflet useful. If you have any questions or are worried about anything, please contact the MRI department on: 01305 255397. (Monday – Friday 08.30-16.30).

You can also contact NHS 111 - 24 hours a day on 111 or <https://111.nhs.uk/>

## About this leaflet:

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If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email [patientinformation.leaflets@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:patientinformation.leaflets@dchft.nhs.uk)



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