

Patient guide to Open MRI



A quick guide to answer your questions regarding your Open MRI scan

What is MRI?

MRI magnetic resonance imaging is a safe, non-invasive diagnostic imaging procedure, its main advantage is its ability to detect various diseases in their early stages especially in soft tissue anatomy. MRI uses radio waves, a magnet, and computer software to obtain two- and three-dimensional (3D) images of the inside of the body.

What is an Open MRI?

The basic technology of an open MRI machine is similar to that of a conventional MRI. The major difference for the patient is that instead of having to go into a tunnel the machine is wide open on three sides allowing more space around the body, alleviating any feelings of claustrophobia. The open design also permits the examination of joints in any position, enhancing the detection of injuries.

Is MRI safe?

There are no known risks or side effects associated with MRI.

MRI does not require the use of ionising radiation and can therefore be performed repeatedly without adverse effect.

How do I prepare for my scan?

No special preparation is required. You may eat, drink and continue to take any medication prior to your MRI scan. However, if you are having a scan of your abdomen you will be asked to fast for four hours before your scan.

If you are in possession of any previous images and reports ie MRI, CT etc please bring it with you on the day of the examination for comparison purposes.

On the day of your appointment you will need to arrive about 15 minutes before your appointment time.

Prior to your scan at UME Diagnostics you will be asked to complete an MRI Safety Questionnaire as some conditions may make an MRI examination inadvisable. Tell your doctor if you have any of the following:

- Artificial heart valves
- Implanted drug infusion ports
- Implanted electronic devices
- Artificial limbs or metallic joint prostheses
- Implanted nerve stimulators
- Metal pins, screws, plates or surgical staples
- Surgical clips
- Cardiac pacemakers
- Neuro and bone stimulators
- Infusion pump
- Electronic and magnetically activated implants

In addition, tell your doctor if you:

- Are or maybe pregnant
- You have had recent surgery
- Have a history of any renal (kidney) problems
- There is any possibility of metal fragments in your eyes

The staff will then determine whether it is possible to go ahead with the exam. It is very important to be accurate. You may be asked to provide additional information about implants before a decision on safety can be made.

We will supply you with a gown to wear during the examination and you will be asked to remove any loose metal objects, credit cards and watches and Lockers will be available for use.

How long will it take?

The scan will usually last approximately 30 minutes for each part of the body being scanned.

What can I expect during my scan?

The Radiographer will position you on the table of the MRI unit. A surface coil may be positioned around the part of the body being studied (e.g. the shoulder). Surface coils act like an antenna to receive the radio waves from the MRI system.

Once you are properly positioned, the table will begin moving you into the MRI machine until the area being studied is in the centre of the magnet. It is important that you remain completely still during the study. You may even be asked to hold your breath. This is because movement can blur the images, making the study less accurate. You will be able to communicate with the staff via intercom throughout the entire study.

During the scan, the main magnetic field strength is altered using electromagnetic coils. This causes a wide range of sounds during the scan procedure including banging, buzzing and rumbling noises. Do not worry these noises are normal but we recommend that you use the earplugs or headphones provided.

The equipment incorporates a CD player enabling you to listen to music. You are welcome to bring your own music selection with you. At our Harley Street and Weybridge sites we are also able to connect your iPod to the stereo system so you are welcome to bring this along.

continued overleaf...

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Will I need an injection ?

Some patients may need a contrast injection to enhance the images, usually in parts of the body which have poor natural contrast. Contrast is a special liquid that highlights the tissue to make subtle differences or pathology easier to see. Allergic reactions to contrast are rare. However, if you feel discomfort or nausea at any time during the study, do not hesitate to alert the radiographer.

Please observe your injection site for signs of infection over the next 24 hours eg redness, soreness, weeping and in the unlikely event of such signs occurring please contact the centre you were seen at immediately for advice or contact your GP.

What happens after my scan?

After your MRI you may eat and drink as usual and resume your normal daily routines immediately after the scan. If you have had an injection it is advisable to drink plenty of fluids to help flush the contrast out of your system.

When will I get the results?

The results of your scan will be sent to your referring doctor/ consultant within 24 hours of your exam. Your report and images will include a summary of the radiologist's findings and recommendations for further follow-up.

Chaperone service

All patients are entitled to have a chaperone present for any consultation, examination or procedure where they feel one is required. This chaperone may be a family member or friend. On occasions it may be necessary for a formal chaperone to be present, ie a trained member of staff. Please let us know prior to your appointment if you require a chaperone.

Any other queries?

If you have any other questions, worries or doubts do not hesitate to ask one of our staff. We want you to feel as comfortable as possible.

UME Diagnostics is committed to the provision of clean, safe premises for clients in line with the Health and Social Care Act 2008 - Code of Practice on the Prevention and Control of Infections and related guidance (Dec 2010) and all other DOH guidance.

For further detailed information about the diagnostic centre that you will be visiting, including contact details and directions on how to get there, please visit our website at www.umediagnostics.com.