



# Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)

A guide for patients and their carers



## What is an MRI scan?

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) combines a powerful magnet and radio waves with a computer to produce pictures of any part of the body. The detail in these pictures allows the doctor to see soft tissues such as muscle, fat and internal organs as well as bone. This scan does not use X-rays.

## Is there any preparation for my MRI scan?

Very little preparation is needed for your scan. You should continue with any medication and you can eat and drink normally. If you are having a head or neck scan, please do not wear make up or mascara as this can interfere with the scan. You may wear a wedding ring for your scan but you should remove all other jewellery.

A questionnaire is included with your appointment letter. This information helps us to make sure that the scan is as safe as possible for you.

**It is important that you contact the department (0161 918 2525) before your appointment if:**

- you have **EVER** had metallic fragments in your eyes
- you have a cardiac pacemaker/artificial heart valve
- you have a cochlear implant
- you have had a previous operation for an aneurysm in the brain
- you may be pregnant

When you arrive for your scan, we may ask you to wear a hospital gown. You are welcome to bring your own dressing gown to wear over this gown while you are waiting for your scan. If your own clothing does not have any metal on it such as decorations or fastenings, you may not need to undress for the scan. We will also ask you to remove all metallic items such as keys, coins, hairgrips, and hearing aids as well as other items such as watches or swipe cards with magnetic strips. There are lockers to store your valuables. Please give the key to the radiographer as it is magnetic.

## What happens during the MRI scan?

A radiographer performs the scan. They will explain the procedure to you and answer your questions. Once you are inside the scan room, the radiographer helps you to lie on a comfortable couch. This moves you into the centre of the scanner. The scanner is open at both ends. It is important that you keep still during the scan, as movement causes blurring of the pictures.

The radiographer can see you throughout the examination. If, at any time, you want to contact the radiographer, just squeeze the buzzer that we give you.

Sometimes we give you a small injection of contrast agent (a colourless liquid) and/or buscopan (a muscle relaxant). These help to show parts of the body more clearly and improve the scan.

The whole procedure can take up to 2 hours but most patients are on the scanner for about 45 minutes.

## Will I feel anything during the MRI scan?

No not usually. However some patients can get a little warm during the scan. When the pictures are taken, you will hear a loud knocking sound and feel a slight vibration. We will give you ear protection and you can listen to music.

## What happens after my MRI scan?

After your scan, the radiologist (a specialist doctor who is trained to interpret your scan) will send a report to the consultant, usually within a week.

If you are coming for a **brain scan** you may need to wait for your images to be checked on the day. **There is a possibility that you may not be able to drive home, so please bring someone with you who can drive.**

If you have had an injection during the scan, you will need to wait in the department for 20 minutes after the scan has finished.

## Is the test safe?

MRI has no known harmful effects on the body. It is important that you accurately fill in the patient screening form. The radiographer must know if you have any metal in your body. As with all medication, a small number of people may be allergic to the contrast injection. Tell the radiographer if you have any allergies.

## What is the benefit of an MRI scan?

An MRI scan is often the best scan to identify abnormalities in the organs and tissues of your body. The scan may also show what sort of condition is causing them, for example, cancer, infection or previous injury.

## Are there any alternatives to an MRI scan?

There are other scans which can be done instead of an MRI scan but they may not be as useful in patients with your condition. These include CT (computed tomography scans using X-rays) and US (ultrasound scans using sound waves).

## What happens if I decide not to have an MRI scan?

If you decide not to have an MRI scan then an alternative scan such as a CT or US scan may be needed. The decision to use an alternative scan is usually made by the doctors looking after you together with the radiologists.

## What if I can't keep my MRI appointment?

If you can't keep your appointment, please contact the MRI department straight away.

If you are admitted to hospital before your appointment, please tell the ward staff that you have an MRI appointment booked.

**MRI suite, department 38**  
**Tel: 0161 918 2525**

**Wheelchairs are available at the Palatine Road entrance and the main Oak Road entrance to The Christie. You will need a £1 coin or token which is refundable.**

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard.

If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact [patient.information@christie.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@christie.nhs.uk)

## Christie website

For more information about The Christie and our services, please visit **[www.christie.nhs.uk](http://www.christie.nhs.uk)** or visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford.

The Christie NHS Foundation Trust is actively engaged in research activity. On occasion, we may need to set up a new MRI sequence in order to comply with the imaging guidelines required by some of the trial sponsors. You may be asked if you would agree to have an additional MRI sequence run at the end of your scan appointment. The decision is yours, and the quality of the scans that you are having done as part of your follow-up at The Christie will not be affected if you decline this offer.

### Visit the Cancer Information Centre

The Christie at Withington **0161 446 8100**

The Christie at Oldham **0161 918 7745**

The Christie at Salford **0161 918 7804**

Open Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm.

Opening times can vary, please ring to check before making a special journey.

### The Christie NHS Foundation Trust

Wilmslow Road

Manchester M20 4BX

**0161 446 3000**

**[www.christie.nhs.uk](http://www.christie.nhs.uk)**



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