

How Do I Prepare for an MRI?

In most cases, you do not have to follow any special instructions to prepare for the MRI exam unless your doctor tells you to do so. You may eat a regular diet and take your medicines. The MRI room contains a very strong magnet. Before entering the room, tell the technologist if you have any metal or implanted devices in your body. An MRI exam is safe for most patients with metal implants. However, some types of internal (implanted) defibrillators or pacemakers, intercochlear (ear) implants, stents, clips or coils may interfere with the magnet in the MRI machine.

Please remove all metal objects (such as hearing aids, dentures, jewelry, watches and hairpins) from your body. These objects may also interfere with the powerful magnet and distort the MRI images. Empty your pockets of any coins, pens, cell phones, credit cards and ATM cards before the exam. The MRI magnet may damage these items.

How does an MRI exam work?

At the beginning of the exam, you will lie on a scanner table. The table slides into a well-lit tube with air circulating through it. The technologist leaves the room during the MRI scan. You may use the intercom system to communicate with the technologist throughout the procedure. We will provide you with a call device in case you need to interrupt the exam.

During the exam, you may feel a slight vibration and hear a loud rhythmic drumming noise. We offer you earplugs or headphones to reduce the noise. Please remain as still as possible. Any movement may blur the pictures. When complete, the technologist will return to help you off the table.

How long will the MRI take?

The entire exam takes about 45-60 minutes.



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For directions to any Gwinnett Medical Center facility, please call our Direction Line at 678-312-4652, or visit gmcimaging.org

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 678-312-3444.



MRI Scan

at Gwinnett Medical Center



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Your doctor requested that you have a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) examination. An MRI is a non-invasive medical procedure that helps doctors diagnose and treat medical conditions. It uses a powerful magnetic field, radio frequency waves and a computer to make detailed pictures of the internal parts of your body. MRI is one of the best ways to see inside of the body without cutting it open. Gwinnett Medical Center uses state-of-the-art MRI machines that have a larger, more open tube. This makes MRI exams easier and more comfortable than ever before. The bigger tube accommodates a variety of patient sizes and conditions. The super-short tube (magnet) allows us to complete many exams with your head outside of the tube.

MRI Procedures Offered at GMC

Neurological exams:

- Brain
- Cervical spine
- Thoracic spine
- Lumbar spine
- Brachial plexus
- Lumbar plexus

MR Angiography:

- Intracranial vessels (MRA head)
- Extracranial vessels/ carotid arteries (MRA neck)
- Renal arteries & abdominal aorta

Musculoskeletal exams:

- Shoulder (also with arthrogram)
- Elbow (also with arthrogram)
- Wrist (also with arthrogram)
- Hips (also with arthrogram)
- Knees (also with arthrogram)
- Ankle (also with arthrogram)
- Hand
- Fingers
- Pelvis/SI Joints
- Foot
- Toes
- Humerus
- Forearm
- Thigh
- Lower Leg

Other:

- Breast
- TMJ
- MRCP
- Cardiac
- Abdomen (liver, kidneys, pancreas, adrenal glands)
- Soft-tissue neck

What is an Orbital X-ray?

An Orbital X-ray is an X-ray of the eyes. Your doctor may order this procedure before your MRI scan to make sure you do not have any foreign objects in your eyes.

What can you expect during the exam?

When you arrive, our receptionist helps you complete the registration forms. Please arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled exam time. This allows enough time to make sure we have all of the information we need to complete your exam. Be sure to bring your insurance card, state-issued identification and implant identification card if you have an implant.

Before the exam, we take you to a changing room with lockers. Depending on the type of exam your doctor ordered, we may ask you to take off your clothes and change into a hospital gown. Please empty your pockets and remove all jewelry and metal objects from your body. The technologist will ask about your past medical and surgical history, explain the examination process to you and answer all of your questions.

Tell the technologist if you have any medical or electronic implant devices. These devices may interfere with the exam and may pose a health risk to you. Examples of implants include artificial heart valves, implanted drug infusion ports and cardiac devices (pacemaker or ICD), artificial limbs or metallic joint prostheses, implanted nerve stimulators, metal pins, screws, plates, stents or surgical staples. Be sure to tell the technologist of any shrapnel, bullets, braces, expanders or other pieces of metal present in your body due to accidents. Although rare, dyes used in tattoos may contain iron and could heat up during your MRI exam. Please tell the technologist if you have any serious health problems or if you recently had surgery.

Some MRI exams require us to inject contrast into your vein. Tell the technologist if you have any allergies, especially to iodine, X-ray contrast and medicines. The contrast material we use (Gadolinium) does not contain iodine and does not normally cause side effects or an allergic reaction. Contrast dye can cause serious problems for some health conditions such as severe kidney disease. Your doctor may order a blood test to check how well your kidneys are working before giving you contrast dye. If you receive contrast dye, you may feel a cool, flushing sensation for the first minute or two.

MRI exams are painless. However, some people have a hard time staying very still during the entire exam or may feel closed-in. If you think you will feel uncomfortable, please talk with your doctor. We can give you medicine to help you relax during the exam. You may notice a slight warm feeling where the MRI machine scans your body. This is normal, however, if you begin to feel very uncomfortable, please alert the technologist. It is very important that you remain as still as possible while the MRI machine scans your body. Although you may be alone in the exam room during the procedure, the technologist can see, hear and speak to you at all times using a two-way intercom.

If we did not give you any medicine to help you relax, you may resume your usual activities immediately after the exam. You may feel nauseous and some pain at the IV site after receiving the contrast dye. Although an allergic reaction to the contrast dye is rare, please tell us immediately if you begin to experience allergic symptoms, such as hives, itchy eyes and trouble breathing.

What if I have dental fillings, braces or other dental appliances?

Please take out all removable dental appliances before the exam. Dental work may distort some images around the mouth, however, there is no health risk posed to you.

What if I have stents, coils, filters or vascular implants?

Some coils, stents, filters and vascular grafts can interfere with the MRI scan and can pose a health problem for you. Please bring your implant identification card with you. This will tell us whether your implant will interfere with your MRI scan.

What is the weight limitation for MRI?

The weight limit for our MRI system is 550 lbs and most patients are able to fit into the scanner.

Should I take my own medicine if I am claustrophobic?

If you have claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces) or have anxiety, please talk with your doctor about which medicine to take to help you feel more comfortable during the exam. Our scanning table sits in an airy room and the tube is open at both ends. The tube is well lit and has air circulating through it. Most people do not need medicine to help them relax during the procedure. If you need medicine, you must talk with your doctor and get your medicine before your MRI appointment. Gwinnett Medical Center will not provide you with any medicine to help you relax. If you plan to take medicine, be sure to make arrangements for a family member or friend to drive you to and from the hospital.

Should I bring my own earphones and music?

You do not need to bring your own music or playing device. We will provide you with set of MRI compatible headphones and music. You may bring your own CDs or choose the radio station you want to listen to during the procedure.

Can pregnant women have an MRI?

An MRI does not use radiation. If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor about the potential risks and benefits of having an MRI.

Is an MRI safe?

MRI is extremely safe as long as proper safety precautions are taken. The strong magnet fields used during the exam may pose some safety concerns if you have an implant device (pacemaker, aneurysm clip) or a history of eye injury involving metal fragments. Please tell us about any implants you have so we can determine if an MRI exam is safe for you. For example, we must know the name and brand of your implant device to know whether or not the high magnetic field will affect your implant.

When do I get my MRI results?

Usually, the radiologist reads the images and sends a report to your doctor within 48 hours.

