



Having an MRI scan

You have been referred for an MRI scan by the Audiology Department. This leaflet explains why you need it and what it entails.

Why do I need an MRI scan?

It is routine in the Audiology Department to offer an MRI scan to some patients if their symptoms and test results indicate it may be necessary. You may be offered a scan:

- (a) When there is a significant difference in hearing between your right and left ear and/ or you have noises in one or your ears (tinnitus).
- (b) Your hearing has changed significantly over a certain time-period.
- (c) Based on your balance symptoms or results.



What is the purpose of the scan?

The aim of a scan is to take a closer look at the anatomy of your inner ear and the structures attached. This is to rule out typically benign (non-cancerous) conditions that might account for your test results or symptoms. These conditions may require only regular monitoring by the ENT team although they can sometimes require further management.

What happens during an MRI scan?

The scan is a routine and non-urgent investigation. It may be some weeks before you have your MRI scan after you are referred for the test. The scanner itself is a large magnet that uses magnetic fields to take pictures of the areas of interest. For a scan of the inner ear (and brain), the scanner usually encircles your head and upper body. You will need to be quite still during the course of the scan. In most cases it will last up to 10-15 minutes. MRI scans can be carried out in the Royal Berkshire Hospital (Reading), West Berkshire Community Hospital (Thatcham) or Bracknell Healthspace (Bracknell). More information on the scan process will be sent to you by the scanning department (Radiology).

Before we send you for an MRI scan

As a precaution and in order to assess if it is safe to carry out the MRI, it is important that you tell us if you have any of the following:

- Cardiac pacemaker or implanted cardiac defibrillators
- Shunts
- Heart valves
- Cochlear implants
- Neurostimulators

- Other electronic, magnetic or mechanical implants
- Metal fragments in the eye
- History of heart or brain surgery
- Aneurysm clips
- Infusion pumps
- Other metallic implants, surgical clips and/or shrapnel and metal foreign bodies

This is because the strong magnets used during the MRI scan can affect or interfere with any of the things listed above, and could cause damage to both you and the scanner.

What happens after the scan?

Your results are reviewed by the ENT team to rule out the need for further management. It is uncommon for us to find the conditions* for which we are scanning you (1-2% of scans). Occasionally, scans can produce incidental findings (findings that are not related to the question we have asked or the symptom you have come with), which may require discussion or an appointment with another team to see if any further management is required. However, this is uncommon (5% or less). More commonly, we find some less significant differences (like normal anatomical variants) that require no further action or advice to you or your GP, and require no further active management from a hospital team.

The radiologist (scan expert) will view and report on your scan results. This will be reviewed by the Audiology team and by the ENT team where required. A letter will be written explaining the results and a copy of this will be sent to your GP, with a copy sent to you.

This is a routine and non-urgent scan. It will take up to 2 weeks or more, after the MRI, for the Radiology team to report on the scan. We aim to write to you with these results within 6 weeks of receipt of these results (which is a total of 8 weeks, typically).

**Your healthcare professional will discuss these with you.*

If you have any further questions, please contact:

The Audiology Department on tel: 0118 322 7238

Email: audiology.royalberkshire@nhs.net

Website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/audiology

MRI (Radiology) Department: 0118 322 7944

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Audiology (PA-2), March 2026.

Next review due: Mar 2028.