

Breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) – what to expect

What is an MRI of the breast?

MRI stands for Magnetic Resonance Imaging. An MRI scan is an investigation that produces pictures of the inside of the breast.

The MRI machine is basically a large ring-shaped magnet with a high magnetic field strength, therefore does not use radiation (x-ray).

The whole body will pass through the tube, producing detailed images of the breast from side to side, top to bottom and front to back.

These images will then be interpreted by the radiologist (x-ray medical specialist).

Why is breast MRI used?

Breast MRI can be used for several reasons:

- To provide more information about an abnormality.
- To assess accurate size or extent of a tumour.
- To assess whether there is more than one tumour.
- To monitor tumour shrinkage during chemotherapy.
- In young women who have dense breast tissue difficult to read on mammogram.
- To investigate abnormalities felt but not seen on any imaging.
- To screen higher risk women assessed by genetic service.

Who should not have MRI?

MRI in most people is very safe; however, please inform a member of staff if you:

- Have a cardiac pacemaker.
- Have artificial limbs, metal pins or fragments, metal-based tattoos or any other implanted medical device, e.g. Cochlear implant.
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Have a known allergy to the dye used in MRI (Gandolinium).
- Have any serious health condition, e.g. kidney disease, Sickle Cell Anaemia.
- Have any body jewellery unable to be removed.
- Have claustrophobia.

Before the MRI

- Dress in loose clothing with no metallic buttons or zips.
- No hairspray, hair gel or makeup as some substances may interfere with the scan.
- You will be required to complete a safety questionnaire on arrival.
- Please bring your medication list with you.
- You will be looked after by a radiographer.

What happens during the MRI

- The radiographer will insert a needle into one of your veins in your hand for the contrast (dye) to be injected during the scan.
- You may feel a warm sensation when the contrast is injected through the needle.
- You will lie on your stomach on the scanning table and your breast will be placed into specially designed hollows which contain coils which detect the magnetic signal.
- You will have headphones in place playing music.
- The table will then move into the magnetic tube for the scan.
- During the scan the radiographer monitors and communicates with you from outside of the tube.
- The scan can take up to an hour.



For further information please contact

MRI appointments: 0118 322 7991

Carolyn Denham, Specialist Nurse: 0118 322 8563

If you have any questions about any procedure or this information, please speak to your doctor or nurse.

For more information about the Trust visit our website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

C Denham, Breast Screening, June 2020

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