

# **MRI General Procedures**

## **Information for Patients Having an MRI Scan**

### **What is an MRI Scan?**

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a painless and harmless examination. This type of scan uses a powerful magnetic field and radio-frequencies. It does not use X-rays. It is a technique that allows doctors to view very detailed cross-sectional images of the body part being examined, to help in the diagnosis and planning of any treatment that may be necessary.

### **Preparing for your MRI scan**

You may eat, drink and take any medication as usual before your MRI scan.

When you receive your appointment letter, it will include a safety questionnaire. Please follow the instructions carefully and bring the completed form to the MRI Department when you attend for your appointment. If possible, please do not wear any jewellery.

On the day of your scan we need to complete a more detailed MRI safety questionnaire to ensure your comfort and safety.

If you have been told by a doctor that you have renal impairment (reduced kidney function), please inform the radiographer when you arrive for your appointment.

## **What will happen when I arrive?**

When you arrive for your appointment you will be asked to change into a gown. Before the scan, you will be asked to remove all jewellery and metal from your person, except gold wedding rings.

Your valuables should be left at home, on the ward or with a relative. You may also be asked to remove all eye make-up as this can interfere with scans of the head.

## **What happens during the MRI Scan?**

You will be asked to lie flat on the scan table and equipment will be placed around the part of your body we are scanning. When we are taking the pictures, the scanner can be very noisy. It is important that you keep very still as movement will reduce the quality of the images which will mean that we may have to repeat the scans. Usually there are about 4 or 5 different scans, each lasting between 2-8 minutes, and you may be in the scanner for up to 45 minutes in total. You will be given earplugs or headphones to wear and you are welcome to bring a favourite CD to listen to.

Occasionally, an injection of MRI contrast medium (Gadolinium) may be given to enhance the quality of the images so body tissues can be seen more clearly. It is rare that anyone will feel anything other than the small needle that goes into your arm. We will do more scans after the injection.

For certain scans of the bowel or abdomen, you may be given a different injection (Buscopan®) to help relax the muscles and improve the quality of the images obtained.

## **Are there any risks?**

MRI is generally a safe examination. However, because of the strong magnets involved, MRI must not be performed on people with certain metal implants in their bodies such as pacemakers, inner ear implants, surgical

clips within the head and some artificial metallic heart valves. If you have ever had metal fragments in your eyes due to an injury, it will be necessary for you to have them X-rayed immediately before the MRI scan to ensure that no fragments still remain.

Some people may have a mild allergic reaction to the contrast injection (Gadolinium) and may develop a rash or possibly have a mild asthma attack. For this reason we ask patients to remain in the department for one hour after the injection is given. The radiologist and radiographer are trained to recognise these reactions and to treat them.

The injection we give to relax the bowel - Hyoscine Butylbromide (Buscopan®) has occasional mild side effects. It can make your vision slightly blurred so it is advisable not to drive for one hour or so afterwards. It is not suitable for all people, so the radiographer will ask you if you have any history of heart disease or glaucoma before giving you this injection.

## **What will happen after the scan?**

- After your scan you may dress and go home
- If you are given an injection of contrast medium (Gadolinium) you will need to stay in the hospital for about one hour afterwards
- If, after leaving the department, you feel unwell or think you may have had an allergic reaction (rash/hives, swollen lips or difficulty breathing) please contact the MRI department or attend A&E
- If you have the stomach-relaxing injection (Buscopan®), you must be certain that your eyesight has returned to normal before driving your car. Otherwise you should be able to return to your normal lifestyle and work straight away

## **How will you get your results?**

The results of your scan will be sent to the consultant, GP or clinic that requested your scan.