

Breast MRI



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What is a Breast MRI?

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a diagnostic tool which uses magnets and radio waves to view areas inside the body. Note: If you have a pacemaker or other metallic implants, an MRI may not be right for you. The magnetic pull of the MRI could move these objects inside your body.

When you register for your MRI on the date of your examination, you will be given an MRI screening form to complete. The screening questionnaire asks important safety questions. Prior to your exam, the technologist will review your responses to the screening questionnaire. You will not be allowed to wear any jewelry inside the MRI so best to leave at home.

MRI is used to compliment other tools such as mammography and ultrasound. You will have these tests before MRI is considered. If your doctor feels an MRI is right for you, he/she will send a requisition to the radiologist who will approve the MRI in special cases such as:

- Screening in high risk patients (those with a 25% or higher lifetime risk of breast cancer)
- Planning treatment for women with breast cancer
- To assess the breast after a lump has been removed
- To assess if a tumor has spread or how much it has changed with chemotherapy
- To assess for recurrent breast cancer versus scar tissue
- For women with silicone breast implants

What will happen during the MRI?

A breast MRI requires an injection of contrast medium into the bloodstream during the test to obtain clear pictures. Before the administration of contrast, patients are carefully screened to ensure that there are

no risk factors present that may have the potential to cause an adverse reaction from the contrast media. The contrast material used for an MRI exam, called gadolinium (Gad), is very safe. Adverse reactions are therefore rare; however, we must be thorough in our screening to keep patients safe. It is important that patients disclose any serious health problems or if they have recently had surgery. Some conditions, such as severe kidney disease may prevent patients from being given contrast material for an MRI.

You will be asked to change into a hospital gown and then be placed inside the magnet on your stomach. There are special coils which surround your breast to create the pictures. Your breast will be slightly compressed, but much less than with a mammogram. The magnet is like a big long square donut with a hole in the middle and open at both ends. While you are in the magnet you will hear loud noises but will be given earplugs. The technologist will be sitting at the control booth in the next room and they can see you through the glass. They will talk to you throughout the test.

The test takes about 30-60 minutes. It is important to lie very still during the test to get clear pictures. If you have trouble staying still for that long or become uncomfortable in confined spaces, your doctor may prescribe a mild sedative to help you relax. Please discuss this with your doctor ahead of time. If you do take a sedative, ensure you have a safe way home as you will not be permitted to drive for several hours after the sedative has worn off.

What will happen after the MRI?

After your scan you may return to your normal activities. The radiologist will send the MRI report to your physician. The results will be given to you by your physician.