**MRI FAQs**

*What is a MRI Scan?*

A MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan consists of a table that slides into a cylindrical (tube-shaped) machine that creates a strong magnetic field around the patient and sends pulses of radio waves. The radio waves knock the protons of the atoms in your body out of their natural position. As the protons realign into proper position, they send out radio signals. These radio signals are received by an MRI computer, which processes and generates a series of 2D (two- dimensional) or 3D (three-dimensional) images of the part of the body being examined. The images can then be studied from different angles by the interpreting radiologist.

*Are MRIs safe?*

Yes, MRI uses a strong magnetic field, radio waves and an advanced computer to produce images without using radiation.

On arrival, you will be asked to fill out a safety screening form. The safety issues associated with MRI are related to items that may create a health hazard when taken into a magnetic field. These include:

* Cardiac pacemaker or implantable defibrillator
* Vascular clips or coils placed to prevent bleeding from an aneurysm
* Implanted or external medication pump (such as those used to deliver insulin or pain-relieving medication)
* Cochlear (inner ear) or stapes implant
* Neurostimulator device
* Catheter which has metal components

Some items, including certain cardiac pacemakers, neurostimulation systems and medication pumps are acceptable for MRI. However, the MRI technologist and radiologist must know the exact type that you have in order to follow special procedures to ensure your safety. Please let the receptionist know if you have any of the above listed devices at time of making your MRI appointment.

*Why is it noisy?*

During a scan a part of the MRI machine called a ‘*gradient coil’* is turned on and off rapidly, resulting in the loud banging noises you will hear. You will be given earplugs to wear which is a safety requirement when undergoing an MRI scan. You will also be given headphones with your choice of radio station!

*What if I’m claustrophobic?*

Our [MRI during pregnancy](http://radiusimaging.com.au/services/mri-scan#mri_during_pregnancy)

* [What can I expect after the MRI scan](http://radiusimaging.com.au/services/mri-scan#what_can_i_expect_after_the_mri_scan)
* [WorkCover, Employers and TAC for MRI](http://radiusimaging.com.au/services/mri-scan#workcover,_employers_and_tac_for_mri)
* [DVA for MRI](http://radiusimaging.com.au/services/mri-scan#dva_for_mri)

MRI scanner is one of the shortest and widest on the market, at 140cm long and 70cm wide. This enables *‘head-out, feet first’* positioning for a large variety of MRI exams. The open bore, wide system and ultra-short system design, together with the quieter software, makes it far more comfortable for patients than comparable MRI scanners in the region.

Our technologists are experienced in making you feel at ease and will be able to assist you with any questions you have at the time of your scan. It is helpful to know you will be wearing headphones, which allows communication between you and the technologist throughout the scan.

We are unable to provide sedation on-site for MRI scans at Radius. Please discuss this option with your doctor.

*What if I’m pregnant?*

If you are pregnant or think you might be please advise your doctor and the medical imaging technologist before your MRI scan. MRI is safer for the unborn child (foetus) than imaging with X-rays or CT scans. However, MRI scans can cause slight warming of the body, so as a precaution MRI scanning is avoided during the first 3 months of pregnancy, unless the scan is considered essential. Non-urgent MRI scans are generally delayed until after the baby is delivered. In some situations, other scans such as an ultrasound, may be used instead of MRI.

*Do I need to get changed?*

Yes, we require all patients to change into a set of top and bottom scrubs. This is for your safety and comfort, and to reduce the risk of any ferromagnetic material (material which will be attracted to the magnet) accidentally being taken into the room in pockets etc. You will be asked to remove jewellery, glasses, hair clips, hearing aids and all other metallic items.

*Do I need an injection of contrast dye during my scan? Why?*

Some MRI scans may require you to have an injection of a contrast dye called Gadolinium, which used to assist the radiologist to look at parts of your body such as blood vessels and organs. You will be advised of the possibility of this injection at the time of booking.

The injection of contrast is given through a fine needle or cannula placed in your arm just before the images are taken, and has no side effects.

*Is the contrast dye safe?*

At the time of booking you may be asked for medical history such as allergies, kidney problems and blood test results to check it is safe for you to have the dye. The medical imaging technologist will prepare you for this injection and go through a consent form and any questions you may have when you are taken through for your MRI scan. Although it is called a ‘dye’ the contrast is clear, and not radioactive.

*What happens after I’ve had the contrast dye?*

There are no side effects and you are able to eat and drink as normal following your scan.

*Can I still take my medication before my scan?*

Yes, please continue taking any medication which has been prescribed by your doctor unless advised otherwise.

*How long will it take?*

Most MRI scans take 30-45 minutes. You will be advised of this at the time of booking. Please arrive 15 minutes prior to your appointment to complete the safety paperwork.

You will be asked to send us a copy of your referral prior to your scan so the technologist can accurately allow enough time for your scan.

*How much will it cost?*

Unfortunately MRI scans at Radius are not covered by Medicare, therefore there is no rebate. You will be asked to send us a copy of your referral prior to your scan so an accurate quote can be provided.

If you are WorkCover or TAC claimant we will invoice your agent directly, however should the invoice be rejected or remain unpaid for 3 months then an invoice will be sent to you for payment. DVA gold cardholders will be covered for most services. White cardholders are requested to seek authorisation from DVA prior to attending or booking their MRI scan, to ensure that DVA will pay the costs of service.

*Can I use my private health insurance?*

Generally speaking, private medical imaging procedures are only covered if you are an inpatient in a private hospital. Please check with your private health provider, as different policies offer different levels of cover.

*Can I bring a relative or friend to my MRI appointment?*

Yes, however due to safety reasons they will be asked to remain in the waiting room for the duration of your scan. Parents of children or claustrophobic patients who require accompaniment will be required to fill in a safety screening form and may also need to get changed.

*Why do you need to see my request form before my appointment?*

You will be asked to send us a copy of your referral prior to your scan so the technologist can accurately allow enough time for your scan an accurate quote can be provided.

*What happens to my results?*

Your MRI scan is reviewed by our radiologist who is the specialist doctor onsite at Radius. A report is made based on any findings and sent to your doctor within 24-48 hours. Urgent MRI scans may be able to be reviewed at the time of your appointment.