

# Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

**Please arrive 30 minutes (half an hour) before your appointment time.**

**If you are having Magnetic Resonance Imaging for Enterography or Urography:**

- › **Please arrive 90 minutes (1 ½ hours) before your appointment time.**

The MRI machines have size and weight limits. If you weigh more than 350 pounds (159 kg), please call the MRI Department before your appointment.



**IWK Health**

Aussi disponible en français : FF85-1960



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

## What is an MRI?

- MRI stands for Magnetic Resonance Imaging.
- An MRI machine uses a powerful magnet, radio waves, and a computer. It does not use radiation or X-rays.
- An MRI machine takes detailed images of the tissues in your body. These images will help your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or specialist diagnose your condition.
- **Having an MRI does not hurt.**

## How long does an MRI take?

- An MRI can take from 15 minutes up to 2 hours, depending on the type you are having.

## How do I get ready for my MRI?

- If your child is having an MRI, please see page 5.
- If you are claustrophobic (scared of being in small spaces), please get medication from your primary health care provider and bring it with you, if needed. The MRI Department **does not** give this medication.

- If you have kidney problems, you may need to have a blood test before your appointment. Ask your primary health care provider or specialist if you need blood tests.
- If you have dental braces and need an MRI of your brain, eyes, ears, or jaw, call the MRI Department before your appointment.
  - › Nova Scotia Health:  
<https://library.nshealth.ca/mri>
  - › IWK:  
Phone: 902-470-7027
- If your MRI is for your abdomen (stomach area) or pelvis, **do not eat or drink anything for 4 to 6 hours before your appointment.**
- Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health are scent-free. **Do not wear scented products** (like perfume, cologne) to your appointment.

## **What should I bring to my appointment?**

- Your provincial (MSI) health card.
- If English is not your first language, bring a support person to help you fill out the *MRI Safety Screening Form* and get ready for your exam. If you do not have someone to help you, tell the MRI booking office as soon as possible so we can arrange for an interpreter.
  - › Nova Scotia Health:  
<https://library.nshealth.ca/mri>

› IWK:

Phone: 902-470-7027

- If you use medication for claustrophobia (as prescribed by your primary health care provider), **you will need someone to drive you home after your exam.** Ask your primary health care provider or pharmacist if you will also need someone to stay with you overnight.
- Glasses to read, if needed.

## **What will happen at my appointment?**

- When you arrive at the MRI Department, you will be asked to fill out an *MRI Safety Screening Form*. The MRI technologist will then review the form with you.
- We will ask you to change into a hospital gown. You will have a locker to put your things in.
- We will ask you to remove all metal from your body. This includes hearing aids, jewelry, hairpins, watches, and piercings.
- We will ask you to remove any makeup.
- You may need to have an MRI contrast (dye) given by an injection into a vein in your arm using an intravenous (I.V.) or a needle. The radiologist (doctor who specializes in medical imaging) will decide if you need a contrast dye to get a better image. In rare cases, some people have a reaction to the contrast dye.

## What will happen during the MRI?

- The technologist will bring you into the MRI room. We will ask you to lie down on a padded table.
- MRI equipment will be placed on your body in the area where the MRI will be done.
- The table will then move slowly into the MRI machine, so that the part of your body being scanned is in the middle of the machine.
- **It is important that you stay very still during the MRI.** Moving will cause the images to be blurry.
- The MRI machine will make a lot of noise. This might sound like banging, buzzing, or beeping. The technologist will give you earplugs or headphones to wear during your MRI to protect your hearing.

## What will happen after the MRI?

- If you were given contrast dye, drink lots of fluids for 12 hours after your MRI.
- You can go back to your usual activities right after your MRI.
  - › If you took medication for claustrophobia, you will need a responsible adult to drive you home. **Do not drive yourself home.**

- A radiologist will review your MRI images and send a report to your primary health care provider. Your primary health care provider will go over the results with you.

## **Children**

- A child may need general anesthetic (medication to put them to sleep) before an MRI.
- A nurse from the IWK's Diagnostic Imaging Department will contact you with instructions about fasting (whether they can eat and/or drink before the MRI), medications, and anything else you may need to know about your child's MRI.

## **Pregnancy**

- If you are pregnant, call the MRI Department to ask if your exam will need to be rebooked after you have your baby.
- An MRI is safe during pregnancy under certain conditions. The exam is usually done after the 1<sup>st</sup> trimester, and MRI contrast dye is not usually used.
- If you are not sure if you are pregnant, you should take a home pregnancy test before coming for your MRI appointment.

- **It is safe to keep breastfeeding or chestfeeding after having MRI contrast dye.** Less than 1% of the contrast dye is passed into breast milk, with less than 1% of that amount being absorbed (taken in) by the baby's digestive tract.
  - › If you do not want to breastfeed after having MRI contrast dye, you should get rid of your breast milk for 24 hours after your MRI. You may want to store breast milk before your appointment so you can feed your baby during these 24 hours.

**The MRI machine is always on.**

- Every person who enters the MRI area must fill out an *MRI Safety Screening Form*.
- Every time you have an MRI, you must fill out an *MRI Safety Screening Form*.
- **MRI exams are not safe for everyone.** It may not be safe to have an MRI if you have certain implants. If you have any implanted objects or devices, ask your primary health care provider for more information.
- **Tell the technologist if you have:**
  - › A pacemaker or an implanted defibrillator
  - › Aneurysm clips
  - › Vascular stents and/or cardiac valves
  - › An implanted drug infusion device (like an insulin pump)

- › Inner ear implants
- › Metallic plates, pins, screws, or other implants
- › A trans-dermal patch (like nicotine or nitroglycerin)
- › Had any surgeries

**It is not safe to have an MRI if your eye has been injured with metal and the metal is still there.**

- › Tell the technologist if you have had an accident where metal entered your eye. You may need to have an X-ray of your eye to check if the metal is still there.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:  
[www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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Learn more: <https://library.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources>