

Radiology Department

Breast MRI - patient's guide

We have received a request for you to have an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan of your breasts. This information tells you about Breast MRI scans, what to expect, and how you can prepare for the scan. If you have any queries or concerns, please call the telephone number on your appointment letter. If you feel unhappy with any part of your care, please ask to speak to the Superintendent Radiographer.

Important Information

When will I get my appointment?

The booking co-ordinator will send you an appointment letter. If your MRI is being performed as a high-risk cancer screening test and if you have regular periods, then it is important that the scan should be performed between the **6th and 16th days of your menstrual cycle** to avoid false alarms due to hormone related changes. If the given appointment falls outside these dates then please ring the number at the end of this leaflet to change the appointment. If you are not undergoing a high-risk breast cancer screening MRI or no longer have periods, then the above restriction doesn't apply to you.

Please complete the enclosed safety questionnaire and bring it with you to your appointment.

What is MRI of the breast?

Breast MRI is a diagnostic test to view your breast using magnetic fields and radiowaves (not X-rays). Breast MRI only takes pictures of the breasts and part of your armpits.



When is breast MRI used?

MRI of the breast is used for a few reasons:

- To provide additional screening for some women who have increased risk of breast cancer.
- To investigate abnormalities detected by mammograms and ultrasound.
- To assess the extent of a diagnosed cancer prior to planning treatment in some cases.
- To measure the effect of chemotherapy on breast cancers.
- To check the integrity of breast implants.

A contrast dye injection into a vein in your arm is usually required during this scan. If, however, it is being carried out to assess implants, this injection will not be necessary.

Please refer to leaflet enclosed regarding Gadolinium contrast medium.

Ladies of childbearing age: although the risk for the unborn child is minimal, you will be asked to confirm that you are not pregnant before the examination can proceed. If you are pregnant there are some circumstances where the clinical value of a scan outweighs any risk connected to the scan. This will be decided in conjunction with the referring clinicians and yourself.

Ladies needing dye injection who are breast feeding: Please refer to leaflet regarding Gadolinium contrast medium.

High Risk Breast Screening MRI:

If you are having your MRI as part of the High-Risk Screening Programme, please let us know as MRI of the breasts is not recommended for pregnant or lactating women. 02476 967175

Points to remember:

Please read this leaflet carefully to ensure you successfully prepare for the examination.

Patient Information

- Please contact the X-ray Department if your weight is equal to or more than 115 Kg (18 stone) – this is the maximum limit of the scanner.
- Every patient above the age of 64 years needs to have had a blood test within three months of their MRI examination so that their e-GFR (kidney function) can be checked before the administration of any contrast media. If you have had your blood test performed at a GP practice outside of the Coventry area, then you need to bring the e-GFR result to your appointment.
- If you must bring children with you to your MRI scan appointment, please ensure that they have someone to look after them whilst you are having your scan.
- Please bring any sprays or inhalers that you are taking with you to your appointment.
- If you are on medication from your doctor please continue to take it as normal.
- We also ask you to leave any valuable possessions at home.
- Please arrive in the department at **least 20 minutes before** your appointment time so that we have time to go through your safety questionnaire and get you appropriately changed for your examination.
- If you are late for your appointment there is a possibility that we may not be able to scan you, in these instances you will be sent an appointment for another time.

It is very important that you tell us if you have any of the following:

- Pacemakers inserted, ear implants or surgical clips in your head or body. You should contact the MRI department using the telephone number on your appointment letter to check whether your scan can be performed.
- Clips are often used in breast imaging to mark an area in the breast at the time of a biopsy. This will not prevent you having the scan but please mention it.
- It is recommended that you attend for your examination in clothing that contains no metal fastenings, zips or decoration. If this is not possible, a hospital gown will be provided.
- If you have had an accident involving metal fragments penetrating your eyes you should contact the MRI department using the telephone number on your appointment letter. You will need to have a plain X-ray

Patient Information

of your head before the scan can be arranged to confirm that there are no metal fragments remaining in your eyes.

- Please tell the radiographer about any allergic reactions you have when you attend for your scan. Very rarely the dye injected into your vein used may cause an allergic reaction. The radiographers are all trained to deal with such reactions.

What happens when I arrive?

- You will be met by the MRI radiographic helper who will check your personal details.
- The radiographer helper will explain the procedure to you. Please feel free to ask any questions at this time.
- You will be asked to undress and change into a gown. A bag will be provided for your clothes.
- It is very important that you do not bring anything containing metal into the scanning room. Please leave all jewellery, credit cards, piercings, watches, mobile phones, and any other metal objects in the bag provided. Although it would be advisable to leave valuables at home if possible. Gold wedding bands will not affect the scanner.
- The radiographic helper will go through the safety checklist with you.

What happens during the scan?

- All breast MRI (apart from the scan checking the implants) uses a special dye, called a contrast medium (containing gadolinium), which helps us to take detailed pictures of the breast.
- The contrast medium is injected into a vein via a small cannula, which the radiographer will place in your arm. The injection will be carried out about halfway through the scan.
- You will be asked to lie on your front on the MRI couch.
- The radiographer will place your breast through a breast coil which houses two cups to hold your breasts.
- Please let us know if you are not comfortable as it is important that you lie absolutely still.
- The couch then slowly slides through the MRI scanner (with your feet going first into the scanner) and the images are taken.
- The radiographer operates the MRI scanner from behind a clear glass partition. She will be able to see you throughout the procedure and you will be able to talk to each other through a speaker in the MRI scanner.

How long does a breast MRI take?

The procedure takes approximately 30 minutes. You should allow 1 hour 30 minutes for the appointment.

Can I eat and drink on the day of the MRI scan?

Yes, please eat and drink as normal. Please take all your medication as you normally would.

Does having a breast MRI hurt?

- No- MRI scans do not hurt.
- Some women may find the injection uncomfortable. It is also normal to feel a cool sensation when the injection is given.
- Some women may find lying on their front uncomfortable.

I have heard MRI scans are noisy; is this true?

The action of the MRI/ gradient coils makes a knocking or drumming noise. This is perfectly normal. You will be given headphones to reduce this noise. You will still be able to hear what the radiographer says.

Can I bring a friend/relative into the scanning room?

Yes, you can bring a friend provided they have passed the safety questionnaire and that they are not pregnant.

How will I get my results?

- Your results will be posted to you approximately two weeks following your investigation.
- If your MRI was part of the high-risk screening process, your results letter will cover all examinations taken (MRI/Mammography) as part of this process.
- If your breast MRI is part of a series of tests requested by a doctor at the symptomatic breast clinic, your results will be sent to the doctor who made the original request for the MRI. You will then be given an appointment to get these results.

Patient Information

It is not usual to need further investigation of the breast following the MRI. Up to 1 in 20 women who have a breast MRI will be called back for a further appointment which most often is with an ultrasound scan and commonly needing a biopsy. Occasionally, MRI-guided biopsy will be performed.

Contact Numbers

- MRI department can be contacted by telephoning – 024 7696 7122
- If you are having a breast MRI as part of the high-risk breast screening service, they can be contacted on 024 7696 7175.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please ask and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

Have your say. Scan the QR code or visit:

www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback



Document History

Department:	Radiology
Contact:	27121
Updated:	February 2025
Review:	February 2026
Version:	3.2
Reference:	HIC/LFT/2050/16