

MRI: Rectal Scan

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how an MRI scan of the rectum works, how it is done, how to prepare for it, what to expect, and how to get your results.

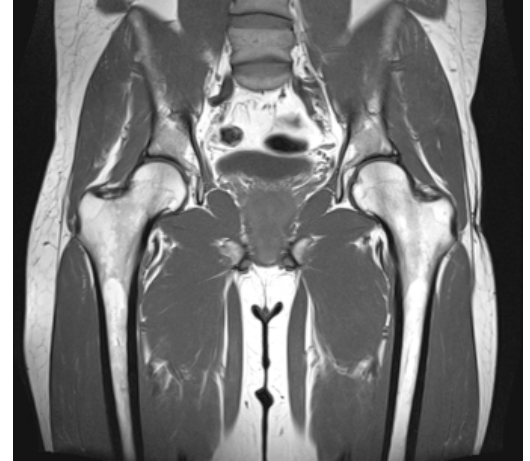
What is MRI?

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is a way to take pictures of your internal organs and tissues. It uses radio waves and a strong magnet to provide clear and detailed pictures. Even different types of tissue within the same organ can be easily seen in an MRI picture.

MRI will help your healthcare provider decide which treatment is best for your health condition.

What is a rectal MRI?

A *rectal* MRI takes pictures of your pelvic area (lower abdomen). Most times, an MRI scan of this area involves taking 8 or 9 sets of pictures. Each set lasts 14 seconds to several minutes. The pictures will show your entire pelvic area and details of your *rectum* (the last section of the large intestine, ending at the anus).



An MRI image of the pelvis area.

For Your Safety

Health Review

We need to know about certain **health conditions** before your MRI scan. Please tell us if you:

- Have any problems with your liver or kidneys
- Need a liver or kidney transplant
- Are on dialysis
- Have had any surgeries
- Have allergies to any drugs or *contrast* (X-ray dye)
- Are pregnant or may be pregnant

Metal Review

We also need to know if you have any **metal in or on your body** before your MRI scan. The strong MRI magnet will pull on any *ferromagnetic* object, such as iron and some other metals.

If you have any metal on or in your body, an MRI can harm you. Even small amounts that will not harm your body can distort the MRI picture.

Please tell MRI staff if you have:

- Aneurysm clips, a heart pacemaker (or artificial heart valve), an implanted port, an infusion catheter (with brand names such as Port-o-cath, Infusaport, or Lifeport), an intrauterine device (IUD), any metal plates, clips, pins, screws, or surgical staples, a prosthetic hip, or any implanted metal object in your body

Most times, surgical staples, clips, plates, pins, and screws are not a risk during MRI if they have been in place for more than 4 to 6 weeks. If there is any question of metal fragments, an X-ray may be done to check for them.

- Tattoos or permanent eyeliner
- Medicine patches
- A bullet or shrapnel in your body
- Ever worked with metal

How do I prepare for the scan?

- Before your MRI, you can eat and drink as usual.
- Please **remove any other items that might contain metal** and affect your MRI pictures. These include:
 - Hairpins
 - Jewelry
 - Glasses, hearing aids, and any removable dental work
- When you arrive in the Radiology department, we will give you a hospital gown and pants to wear. You may put your clothing and other belongings in a locker for safekeeping.

How is the scan done?

- Before scanning begins, an MRI technologist or a nurse will place a small *intravenous* (IV) tube in your arm.
- You will lie on a movable table. The technologist will help get you into position.

- A *catheter* (thin, flexible tube) will be inserted into your rectum. The technologist will inject 120 cc of gel (less than 1 cup) into the catheter.
- The catheter will then be removed. The gel will stay in your rectum during the scan.
- A device called a *surface coil* will be placed over your pelvis. The coil is a special antenna that receives radio energy during the MRI. The coil weighs about 10 pounds. It will extend from your mid-thigh to the bottom of your ribs.
- The technologist will slide the table inside the MRI unit.
- The technologist will then leave the room to take the MRI pictures. You will be able to talk with the technologist at any time through an intercom.
- We will ask you to hold very still as each picture is taken. We may also ask to hold your breath for some of the pictures.
- About halfway through the scan, we will inject contrast into your IV. Contrast makes certain tissues or blood vessels easier to see in the MRI pictures.
- After the scan, we will ask you to wait while we check the pictures for quality. If needed, we will take more pictures.
- When your scan is over, we will remove the surface coil. You will be able to dress and leave Radiology.
- The full scan usually takes 30 to 60 minutes.

What will I feel during the scan?

- MRI scans do not cause pain.
- Some patients may feel uneasy (*claustrophobic*) when they are inside the MRI unit. Please tell the doctor who referred you for the MRI if you feel uneasy in small spaces. You may receive medicine to help you relax.
- You may notice a warm feeling in the area where the pictures are taken. This is normal. If it bothers you, please tell the technologist.
- You will hear loud tapping or knocking noises during the scan. We will give you earplugs and headphones with music to help block some of these sounds.
- You may feel coolness at the IV site when the contrast is injected. The technologist will tell you when the contrast is about to be injected.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist skilled in MRI will review and interpret your MRI images. The radiologist will not talk with you about the results, but will send a report to your provider who referred you for the scan. Your own provider will talk with you about the results of your scan.

You may also read your results on your eCare Results page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

You and your provider will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC Imaging Services:
206.598.6200
- Harborview Imaging
Services: 206.744.3105