

MRI: Fetal Scan

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 easily be seen in an MRI image.

How does the scan work?

During an MRI fetal scan, 8 or more sets of pictures are taken of the abdomen where the fetus is. Each set lasts 1 to 6 minutes. Each set shows a cross-section (called a slice) of the fetus.

For your safety

Health review

Before we give you an MRI scan, we need to know about certain health conditions. Please tell us if you:

- Have any problems with your liver or kidneys
- Need a liver or kidney transplant
- Are on dialysis
- Have allergies to any drugs
- Have had any surgeries

Please also tell us how many weeks pregnant you are.

Metal review

We also need to know if you have any metal in or on your body before we give you an 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

Please also 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

How is the scan done?

- You will lie on a sliding table. The MRI technologist will help you get into position. A device called a surface coil will be placed around your abdomen.
- The technologist will slide the table inside the MRI unit and then leave the room to take the MRI pictures.
- You will be able to talk with the technologist at any time using an intercom.
- Based on how many pictures are needed, the scan will take about 20 to 40 minutes.
- The technologist will ask you to hold very still while the MRI pictures are taken. Even small motions can blur the images.
- We may need to take extra images if the baby moves during the scan. If this happens, the scan may last longer than 40 minutes.
- Contrast is not needed for this exam.
- After the scan, you will be asked to wait until the pictures are checked for quality. We will take more pictures if needed.
- When your scan is over, the surface coil will be removed.

What will I feel during the MRI scan?

- MRI does not cause pain.
- Some patients may feel confined or uneasy (claustrophobic) when they are inside the MRI unit. Please tell the doctor who referred you for the MRI if you are claustrophobic. You may receive medicine to help you relax.

- You may notice a warm feeling in the target area. This is normal, but if it bothers you, tell the MRI technologist.
- For some patients, the loud tapping or knocking noises at certain times of the scan are annoying. We will provide you with earplugs and headphones for music.

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 primary care or referring doctor. This doctor will give you the results.