



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Breast MRI

Issued by the breast team

What is an MRI scan?

MRI stands for magnetic resonance imaging; it is a non-invasive medical imaging test with no radiation (x-rays). The MRI scanner uses magnets, radio frequency pulses and a computer to produce detailed pictures of your breasts.

The machine which takes the pictures is a long tube which has the magnets within it. During the scan you will lie face down on the couch that slides through the tube. Prior to having the scan you will have a small needle called a cannula inserted into a vein in your arm. This allows us to give a dye into your vein to allow the pictures to be taken.

It is not a replacement for mammograms, (breast x-rays) or ultrasound scan, but it is used to provide extra information about your breasts.

The MRI scanner takes detailed pictures of your breasts from top to bottom and side to side. These are examined, and reported on, by a consultant radiologist.

When is breast MRI used?

Breast MRI can be done for a number of reasons:

- To investigate abnormalities detected by mammograms and ultrasound scan
- To assess the size and extent of a diagnosed cancer prior to planning treatment
- To measure the effect of chemotherapy treatment on breast cancers
- To check the condition of breast implants

Where will the MRI scan be carried out?

MRI is available at North Tyneside and Wansbeck general hospitals, in a designated unit near the x-ray department.

Who cannot have MRI?

Because of the powerful magnets used in MRI scanning, it is not a suitable test for everyone. Before you have the scan the radiographer will go through a safety checklist with you.

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

- Any form of surgical implant
- A heart pacemaker
- A cochlear implant (to help with hearing)
- Internal electronic devices
- Aneurysm clips (clips on arteries)
- A previous history of metal in your eye
- Had a brain or spinal injury in the past
- If you are pregnant or breast feeding
- If you have any known allergy to the contrast (dye) used for MRI
- Other health conditions like serious kidney disease or liver disease that may prevent you from having the contrast (dye)

If any of the above apply then we may delay your MRI until we can get more information about your medical history, this is for your own safety.

Please also tell us if you:

- Weigh more than 18 stones (114kg), as we may need to make alternative arrangements for your appointment
- Are, or think you may be, pregnant
- Are breastfeeding
- Are claustrophobic
- Have had a recent MRI at another hospital

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an MRI?

- A breast MRI is a safe, painless and relatively quick procedure, it does not use radiation
- MRI does not involve the use of x-rays
- Although the scanner is open at both ends some people find it claustrophobic. Please let us know in advance if this is a problem for you
- The scanner makes a loud thumping noise during the procedure, which you may find unpleasant. We can give you headphones or earplugs to wear, to muffle the noise. If you wish you can bring a CD to listen to during the scan
- Breast feeding, milk should be discarded for 24 hours after the MRI scan
- Pregnancy – unless the MRI scan is considered to be urgent we generally avoid scanning during the first 3 months of your pregnancy

You can eat and drink as normal, and take any medicines that you need before and after your appointment.

What happens when I arrive?

- You will be met by the receptionist who will check your personal details
- You will meet the MRI radiographer, who will check your details, and do a safety checklist with you
- The radiographer will explain the procedure to you, and ask you to sign a consent form. Please feel free to ask any questions at this time
- You will be shown to a private cubicle, asked to undress and change into a gown. You will be provided with a locker for your belongings
- A small needle called a cannula will be inserted into your arm. This means we can give you the dye needed during the scan to see your breasts properly
- 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 locker provided. Gold wedding bands will not affect the scanner

What happens during the scan?

- When you are ready the radiographer will insert a small needle called a cannula into a vein in your arm
- You will then be asked to lie on your front on the MRI couch.
- You will be made as comfortable as possible
- The female radiographer will place your breasts through two hollows in the couch. The hollows contain the coils that detect the magnetic signal. The coils do not cause any discomfort to the breast
- The couch will be moved into the magnetic tube for the scan to take place

- After taking a number of images, (pictures, scans), an injection of contrast medium (dye) will be injected through the needle in your arm, via an automatic pump
- You will be asked to breathe normally, but it is important to keep still. Movement can alter your breast tissue whilst they are inside the coils. These alterations can show up on the scan and can affect the picture quality
- The radiographer operates the MRI scanner from behind a partition. They will be able to see you throughout the procedure, though there will be a privacy screen in use when you are getting into position, and you will be able to talk to each other via an intercom system
- Cod liver oil capsules will be used as markers to highlight the position of the nipple and areas of particular concern to the person having the MRI scan.

What happens afterwards?

Once we have all the images required, the cannula will be removed from your arm and a small pad applied. You can get dressed and leave the hospital. There are no after effects from the MRI itself, and you will be free to drive and return to work should you wish.

How long does a breast MRI take?

The procedure takes approximately 45 minutes; however, you should allow 1 ½ hours for the appointment.

When will I get my results?

This will depend on individual circumstances. You will be contacted by the breast team once they are available and a plan discussed. A member of staff will be able to advise you.

Contact us

If you have any concerns or queries please contact us Monday – Friday 8.30am- 5pm.

**Clinical Nurse Specialist Breast Care
North Tyneside General Hospital
0191 293 4183**

**Clinical Nurse Specialist Breast Care
Hexham General
Hospital
01434 655 386**

**Clinical Nurse Specialist Breast Care
Wansbeck General Hospital
01670 529 319
01670 529 391
01670 529 636**

Sources of information

Breast Cancer Care
Helpline 0808 800 6000
Website www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Relief Helpline 0845 601 6161
or Website www.macmillan.org.uk

Breast Care Campaign
www.breastcare.co.uk

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk



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