

# MRI

## Patient Information Leaflet



This information leaflet aims to answer your questions about undergoing your MRI scan here at Heath Lodge Clinic.

### What is an MRI scan?

- MRI is the abbreviated term for “Magnetic Resonance Imaging”.
- An MRI Scanner uses a strong magnetic field and radio frequency waves to produce very detailed images/ pictures of the organs, tissues and other structures inside the body.

### Why do I need to undergo an MRI scan and what are the benefits?

- To undergo an MRI scan you must have a referral letter from a clinician (such as a Consultant, GP, Physiotherapist, or other registered healthcare professional).
- The Clinician referring you for the MRI scan will have an understanding of your symptoms or condition and has decided an MRI scan is the best option for you to diagnose or assess your symptoms or condition.
- MRI scanning offers better soft-tissue detail than X-Rays or even CT scanning, and is the investigation of choice for most head, spine and joint (musculoskeletal) problems.  
The results obtained from an MRI scan can be used to make a clinical diagnosis and treatment plan.

### Is an MRI scan safe and are there any risks involved?

An MRI scan is a very safe way of producing detailed images that can be used to diagnose medical conditions and does not use radiation.

The magnetic forces used during the scan are not harmful but the force of the magnet can attract metal objects which can be dangerous. Therefore, it is vital that you answer all of the questions in the safety questionnaire in as much detail as possible.

Pregnant women can undergo an MRI scan although it should be avoided within the first trimester. It is very important to tell us if you think you might be pregnant or are pregnant.

### Is an MRI scan painful?

We will do our best to ensure your comfort during the scan, however as you will be lying flat, some people will experience discomfort due to this position. You will feel no pain as a direct result of the scan.

You will know when images are being recorded because you will hear loud noises and vibrations. It is important that you remain still while the images are being recorded, which is typically only a few seconds to a few minutes at a time. For some types of exams, you may be asked to hold your breath. You will be able to relax between imaging sequences, but will be asked to maintain your position as much as possible.

The radiographer will not be in the room during the scan, but will be able to see you from behind a screen and will speak to you throughout the procedure. You will be given a buzzer to hold which, should you feel uncomfortable at any time, you can press and the radiographer will stop the scan and come into the scan room to assist you.



### On the day

- Before the scan: How do I prepare for an MRI scan?

On the day of your scan, you will usually be able to eat and drink as normal and take any medicine you have been prescribed. If there are any special requirements, we will discuss this with you when you book your appointment.

Please inform a member of the team if you have any special requirements- for example, if you have difficulty with hearing or poor eyesight, or if you are claustrophobic or nervous about undergoing your MRI scan for any reason.

- What should I wear?

You may be asked to change into a gown. Please try to avoid wearing clothing containing any metal zips or fasteners, or metal threads/ fibres.

If you wear loose-fitting clothing with no fasteners you may be able to remain fully clothed, depending on the area of your body being scanned.

Gold wedding bands are generally MR compatible but base metal items are not MR safe and must not be taken into the scan room as it could result in injury at the point of contact with the skin.

The most common base metals include iron, steel, copper, lead, nickel, aluminium, titanium and zinc.

As part of our MR safety requirements all body piercings, irrespective of where they are situated on the body, must be removed before attending an appointment.

Please note that we reserve the right to postpone the appointment in the event of anyone refusing to comply with this request.

We would also be grateful if other valuables such as watches, necklaces and bracelets are not brought into the clinic. Please note that we do provide lockable areas for small personal items such as mobile phones, car keys and credit or debit cards.

- Can I eat and drink?

There are some MRI scan types which require an empty stomach, if you are having one of these procedures you will be advised prior to the day of your appointment. If you are a diabetic it may be worth bringing a light snack with you if you undergo your scan over your normal meal period and we have no cafeteria facilities and in the event of any delay.

- What if I am Type 1 Diabetic and wear a Libre 1 or 2 monitoring device?

The Libre 1 (or 2) monitoring system will need to be removed before any MR scan due to safety considerations. The Libre System has a metal pin which inserts directly into the patient's arm which therefore makes it incompatible for our scanners.

**Patients must remove this type of device for the duration of their MR scan, and bring a replacement device to any MR appointment.**

- What happens when I arrive and who will I see?

A member of our team will meet you and help you to prepare for your MRI scan. We will complete a thorough safety checklist with you and will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.



You will be asked to sign a consent form before your scan.  
Our friendly Radiography team will look after you for the duration of your MRI scan.

- Where is the MRI scan performed?

All MRI scans are performed within the MRI department of Heath Lodge Clinic.  
This is a controlled environment, and there are additional toilet facilities, as well as private changing rooms and lockers.

- What happens during the MRI scan and how is it performed?

Our Radiographer will assist lying you in the most comfortable and appropriate position on the MRI couch, which will slide into the scanner. We will need you to keep still whilst you are scanned so accurate images are taken. We will ensure you are made as comfortable as possible.

The part of the body that is being investigated will be positioned in the centre of the scanner. You must wear the provided earplugs and headphones to protect your ears from the noise of the MRI scanner as it can be extremely noisy when the images are being taken.

The Radiographer who is performing your MRI scan will talk to you between each scanning sequence. If you experience any difficulties during the scan you can press the buzzer that will be placed in your hand to talk to your Radiographer if you need to. The area of the body being scanned can become hot, and therefore may feel warmer than usual.

- How long will it take?

Most simple scans are completed in 20-30 minutes. Your Radiographer will discuss this with you before commencing your scan.

The duration of the scan depends on which areas of the body are being scanned, for a single area, e.g., lower spine, the time is usually 15- 20 minutes, but for multi-area and contrast scanning it will be longer, the radiographer will be able to advise you of the amount of time your scan should take to complete.

- Will I need an injection?

There are some scans that may require the patient to have an injection, this is called contrast. The contrast dye enables us to see certain areas in more detail. This will normally be administered into a vein in the arm by the radiographer and more pictures will be taken after the injection.

The contrast is excreted naturally from the body within 24 hours. The use of contrast must be authorised by our Consultant Radiologist.

We will always discuss this with you first and there are not usually any side effects from this.  
There will be an additional charge for this which will be discussed with you.

- Can I bring a friend or relative with me?

Yes, you can bring a friend or relative with you.

Due to limited spaces in our waiting area we politely ask that you bring one person maximum only if needed. They will not normally be able to accompany you into the scanner for safety reasons unless there are special circumstances and then they must also complete a safety questionnaire.



Children should not be unaccompanied on site and children will not be allowed into the MRI Department with you, so you will need to make arrangements for them before you arrive for your MRI. It is worth noting we have no facilities for unaccompanied children on site.

### **I am claustrophobic and not sure if I will be able to go into the scanner?**

- The MRI scanners at Heath Lodge Clinic are 'Wide Bore' scanners, which mean they have more room for patients than the older more traditional scanners. We have scanned many claustrophobic patients who have been happy with their experience.
- If you have any concerns, we can arrange for you to speak with a member of our team who will explain the procedure and make some suggestions to make your visit more comfortable. You may want to ask your physician for a prescription for a mild sedative prior to the scheduled examination. It is worth noting that there is a certain amount of sedation required before it can be effective.
- Please see our separate Claustrophobic patient information leaflet for further details.

### **Are there any side effects after the scan?**

There are no known side effects from undergoing an MRI scan.

However, it is extremely important that you tell us before you undergo your scan and enter the MRI department if you have any metal implants inside your body, or if you have been involved in any accidents involving metal going into the eyes.

### **After the MRI scan**

You will be able to eat and drink normally after undergoing your scan, and unless you have received any sedation, you will be able to drive yourself home and return to your usual activities

### **How do I obtain my results?**

You will take a CD containing your pictures away with you and a written report will be sent to your referring clinician within approximately seven working days. You will need to make an appointment with your clinician to discuss your results.

Please note that the patient **DOES NOT** receive a copy of their clinical report findings. The report is sent directly to the clinician who has referred the patient for them to discuss any findings with them.

Please note also that we have plenty of free car parking here at Heath Lodge Clinic.

Should you have any questions, please contact Heath Lodge Clinic on [contact@heathlodgeclinic.co.uk](mailto:contact@heathlodgeclinic.co.uk) or call 01564 732150.