

MRI: Fetal Scan

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how an MRI fetal scan works, how to prepare for it, what to expect during the scan, and how to get your results.

What is an MRI scan?

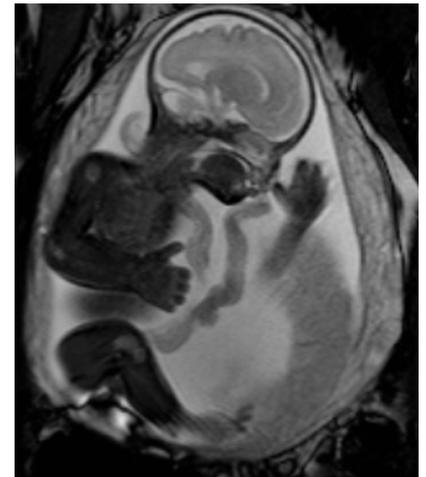
Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is a way to take pictures of your internal organs and tissues. It uses radio waves and a strong magnet to provide clear and detailed pictures. Even different types of tissue within the same organ are easily seen in an MRI image.

What is a fetal scan?

A *fetal scan* creates detailed pictures of your unborn baby. This painless test does **not** expose your baby to radiation.

How does the scan work?

During an MRI fetal scan, we will take 8 or more sets of pictures of your belly. Each set will show a cross-section (*slice*) of the fetus. It takes 1 to 6 minutes to take each set.



An MRI image of a 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, or 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.

Screening for Metal

If you have any metal on or in your body, an MRI can harm you or your baby. The strong MRI magnet will pull on any *ferromagnetic* object, such as iron and some other metals.

This is why we need to know if you have any metal in or on your body before we give you an MRI scan. Even small amounts of metal that will not harm your body can ruin the MRI image.

Please tell MRI staff if you have:

- Aneurysm clips, a heart pacemaker (or artificial heart valve), an implanted port, an infusion catheter (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 needed, we may do an X-ray to check for metal.
- Tattoos or permanent eyeliner
- Medicine patches
- A bullet or shrapnel in your body
- Ever worked with metal

How do I prepare?

Please talk with your provider if you have any concerns about managing pain or anxiety during your MRI scan.

On the Day of Your Scan

- **Remove anything that might contain metal.** This includes:
 - Makeup and nail polish
 - Hairpins and jewelry
 - Glasses, hearing aids, and any removable dental work
- You must change into a hospital gown before your scan. We will give you a gown when you arrive in the MRI department.
- If you have an insulin pump or a patch that delivers any type of drug, we will ask you to remove it before your scan.

What happens during the scan?

- You will lie on a sliding table. The technologist will help you get into position.

- We will place a device called a *surface coil* around your belly.
- The technologist will slide the table inside the MRI unit and then leave the room to take the pictures.
- You can 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 pictures are taken. Even small motions can blur the images.
- If the baby moves during the scan, we may need to take more pictures and the scan may last longer than 40 minutes.
- We do not use contrast for this scan.
- After the scan, we will ask you to wait while we check the pictures for quality. We will take more pictures if needed.
- When your scan is over, we will remove the surface coil.

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. If it bothers you, tell the technologist.
- You will hear loud tapping or knocking noises during the scan. We will provide earplugs and headphones with music to help block some of these sounds.

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: 206.774.3105

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. Your own provider will give you the results.

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

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