

MRI: Prostate Scan

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how an MRI scan of the prostate works, how it is done, how to prepare for it, what to expect, 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 strong magnets to provide clear and detailed pictures. Even different types of tissue within the same organ can be easily seen in an MRI image.

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

What is a prostate MRI?

A prostate MRI takes images of the prostate gland. It is most often done either to diagnose a prostate problem or to plan treatment.

The scan usually involves taking at least 2 sets of pictures of the lower belly. Each set lasts 2 to 15 minutes and shows a different area of your prostate gland and the structures around it.



An MRI image of the prostate and the structures around it.

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, *contrast (X-ray dye)*, or latex compounds

Screening for Metal

If you have any metal on or in your body, an MRI can harm you.

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 our staff if you have:

- Aneurysm clips, a heart pacemaker (or artificial heart valve), an implanted port, an infusion catheter (brand names include Port-o-cath, Infusaport, or Lifeport), any metal plates, clips, pins, screws, or surgical staples, a prosthetic hip, or any other metal implanted 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. We may do an X-ray to check for metal, if needed.*
- 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.**

These include:

- Makeup and nail polish
- Hairpins
- Jewelry
- Glasses, hearing aids, and any removable dental work

How do I prepare?

- Please talk with your referring provider if you have any concerns about managing pain or anxiety during your MRI scan.
- If you take iron medicines or supplements, you must stop taking them 48 hours before your scan. Please talk with the provider who prescribed them if you have questions or concerns.

On the Day of Your Scan

- **Use a Fleet enema to clean out your colon just before you leave your house to come to the hospital.** Follow the instructions on the box.

Can I eat and take my medicines before my scan?

- If your scan is in the **morning**:
 - The evening before your scan, have a light dinner, such as eggs or a sandwich.
 - Do **not** eat breakfast on the morning of your scan.
 - Take your usual medicines.
 - Starting 4 hours before your scan time, do **not** eat any solid food.
 - It is OK to drink liquids that do not contain caffeine, milk, or chocolate up to 1 hour before your scan.
- If your scan is in the **afternoon**:
 - On the morning of your scan, have a light breakfast, such as an egg and toast, or cereal.
 - Do **not** eat lunch.
 - Take your usual medicines.
 - Starting 4 hours before your scan time, do **not** eat any solid food.
 - It is OK to drink liquids that do not contain caffeine, milk, or chocolate up to 1 hour before your scan.

What can I expect?

- 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.

How is the scan done?

- You will lie on a sliding table. The MRI technologist will help get you into position.
- We will give you medicine that will reduce motion in your bowels for a short time. This allows us to get the best possible pictures.
- We will place a device called a *surface coil* on your pelvis.
- 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 through the intercom.
- The scan usually takes 30 to 45 minutes. It may last longer if your doctor has asked for a very detailed study.
- 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.

- We may use an injection of contrast to make certain tissues or blood vessels easier to see. If you need the contrast for your scan:
 - Your doctor will talk with you about it before your scan.
 - You will receive the injection about halfway through the scan.
 - It will be injected through a small needle and an *intravenous* (IV) line in your arm or hand vein.
- After the scan, we will ask you to wait while we check the images for quality. If needed, we will take more pictures.

What will I feel during the 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 feel warmth in the area where the pictures are taken. This is normal. If it bothers you, please tell the MRI technologist.
- You will hear loud tapping or knocking noises during the scan. We will provide earplugs or headphones with music to help block some of these sounds.
- If a contrast injection is needed, you may feel discomfort or coolness at the injection site.

After the Scan

- Drink plenty of fluids the rest of the day to help flush the contrast out of your body. Try to drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluid.
- **If an oral anti-bowel medicine was used for your MRI:** Do **not** drive for 4 hours after your scan. To get home, you can take a bus, taxi, or shuttle; someone can drive you; or you can walk.

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

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 provider. 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.