



What to expect the day of the MRI

Unless otherwise instructed, on the morning of your scan you will be able to run your morning routine as you normally would – eating breakfast and taking your usual medication.

When you arrive at the imaging center, you will be asked a series of screening questions, such as recent surgeries and medical history, to ensure your safety. The biggest precaution, however, is to ensure you don't wear or have any metal inside of you.

“Many imaging centers require patients to change into a gown or scrubs prior to their MRI study, which are supplied at each office for safety purposes,” said St Jean. “It has been proven that several different types of clothing have metal fibers which can cause burning during the exam. To ensure their safety, patients are also expected to answer a series of safety questions regarding previous surgeries and possible metal implants, such as [pacemakers](#), heart stents, stimulators and joint replacements prior to entering the MRI suite.”

While everyone's experience will be different, here are some other things to note:

- **Arrive early.** This will give you time to fill out any additional paperwork and any other prep that might be necessary. The imaging center will usually give you a timeframe for you to arrive to allot for this.
- **Change clothes.** As mentioned earlier, you'll want to remove any metal items, such as jewelry, glasses, hairpins and even underwire bras that could affect the effectiveness of the scan and your personal safety. The office will provide you a gown or scrubs to wear during the exam and a secure place to store your belongings.
- **Secure a ride home.** If you plan to take medication or a sedative, plan ahead of time by having someone either come with you or ask someone to pick you up once the procedure is complete.

What to expect during the exam

The first thing you should know during your exam is that your comfort is most important. Your technologist will provide you with special instructions, blankets, ear plugs and a special button or tool to communicate with them throughout the exam.

Depending on what needs to be scanned, your test will take between 20 to 90 minutes.

Here are some things to expect during the exam:

- **Padded table.** If using a traditional, wide bore or open MRI machine, the imaging technologist will have you lie down on a padded table that slides into the tunnel of the bore (tunnel) where the scanning will take place.
- **Call button.** Your technologist will give you a call button to alert them if something is wrong.
- **Thumping noises.** At certain times you'll hear noises caused by the changing magnetic fields. The clunk, clunk, clunk and buzz sound can be a little stressful for some but shouldn't be cause for concern. You'll be given ear plugs or a sound canceling headset and can listen to music to help drown out some of the noise.
- **Remain still.** The key to succeeding in an MRI exam is to remain as relaxed as possible. Try to keep your body still and let your mind wander. Although deep breathing can be relaxing, it can affect the scan of your chest or abdomen. Your technologist may give you special instructions to hold your breath if one is needed.

Takeaway

Although intimidating machines to look at, an MRI exam is nothing to be nervous about. These exams are critical tools used to give your doctor a clearer picture of [what is going on inside your body](#) and how to best provide you care.