

X-ray, CT and MRI — What to Expect

X-ray

Quick and painless. You will be asked to hold a position for a few seconds. The radiation dose is small. **Always tell the staff if you are or might be pregnant.** Bring your old films — comparing is often more useful than the new film alone.

CT scan

A detailed X-ray taken as you pass through a ring. It takes a few minutes. Higher radiation than a plain X-ray, so we order it only when it will change your treatment. If a **contrast dye** is used, tell us about kidney trouble, diabetes medicines, asthma, or any past reaction to dye. You may need to fast for a few hours.

MRI — TELL US BEFORE THE SCAN IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THESE

A **pacemaker** or implanted heart device · a cochlear (ear) implant · aneurysm clips in the brain · a nerve stimulator or implanted pump · **metal fragments in the eye** from welding or a past injury · recent surgery with metal clips

Most **orthopaedic implants — plates, screws, rods, joint replacements — are safe in the MRI machine.** They may blur the picture nearby, but they will not move. Still, always declare them.

During an MRI

- It takes **20 to 45 minutes** and you must lie still. Moving blurs the images and means repeating the sequence.
- The machine is **very noisy** — loud knocking and buzzing. You will be given earplugs or headphones. This is normal.
- You will have a **call bell** in your hand. Use it if you need to.
- **Remove all metal** — jewellery, watch, hairpins, coins, belt, keys, credit cards, hearing aid, dentures with metal.
- **If you are claustrophobic, tell us in advance.** This is common and nothing to be embarrassed about — we can arrange medication or an open machine.

Search: X-ray, CT scan, MRI, safety, implant, pregnancy, claustrophobia

