

Procedure Information: Breast MRI

What is a breast MRI?

A breast MRI is an exam to help obtain valuable information about many breast conditions. It is not a replacement for mammography or ultrasound imaging.

When is a breast MRI ordered?

- To determine the extent of cancer after a new diagnosis of breast cancer
- Screening in women at high risk for breast cancer
- Further evaluating hard-to-assess abnormalities seen on mammography
- Evaluating lumpectomy sites in the years following breast cancer
- Evaluating breast implants

Patient preparation

- Stop hormone therapy
- A breast MRI should be obtained during a 7-14 day window of the first day of their last menstrual cycle
- A breast MRI cannot be done if the patient is breastfeeding
- Blood work may be required prior to study based on medical history

What happens during a breast MRI?

A MRI technologist will verify your identity and obtain medical history for the radiologist. You will be positioned face down on a platform specially designed for the breast. The platform has openings to accommodate your breasts and allow them to be imaged without compression. The technologist will make sure you are comfortable because it is important to remain very still throughout the MRI exam. The total time of a breast MRI generally last between 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Contrast material (MRI dye) is required for this exam. The technologist will insert an intravenous (IV) catheter into a vein in your arm or hand. MRI images of the breast are taken, then the contrast material will be injected, then more images will be taken after the injection. The IV line will be removed soon after the exam is completed. The MRI machine is loud, so for your comfort our MRI offers a patient stereo system that allows you to listen to a CD or radio station during your study. You are welcome to bring a CD of your own.