

Procedure Information: MRI of the Spine

What is an MRI of the spine ?

A MRI of the spine is a medical test that provides images of the vertebrae that makes up the spine, as well as the disks, spinal cord and spaces between the vertebrae through which nerves pass.

When is an MRI of the spine ordered?

- Assess intervertebral disk disease (degenerated, bulging, or herniated)
- Severe lower back pain and sciatica (back pain radiating into leg)
- Assess compression of the spinal cord and nerves
- Monitor changes in spine after an operation, such as scarring or infection
- Assess the spinal anatomy and alignment
- Detect congenital anomalies of the vertebrae or the spine canal
- Spinal infection or tumors that arise in, or have spread to the spine
- Assess inflammation of the spinal cord or nerves
- Help plan spinal surgical procedures, such as decompression of a pinched nerve or spinal fusion
- Explore other possible causes of back pain

Patient preparation

- No preparation is needed for this exam
- Wear comfortable loose-fitting clothing with no metal snaps, zippers or other metal material
- Blood work may be required prior to study depending on your age or medical history

What happens during an MRI of the spine?

A MRI technologist will verify your identity and obtain medical history for the radiologist. You will be asked to lay flat on a padded examination table. The MRI technologist will make sure you are as comfortable as possible because you will need to hold still for the duration of your scan. 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.

What happens during an MRI of the spine? Continued...

Certain MRI exams require the use of a contrasting agent, which is given through a intravenous (IV) injection. If this is necessary, it will be discussed in detail with you prior to injection.

Length of Procedure

The MRI scan will take up to 30-45 minutes depending on the area of interest and the use of a contrast injection.