

# Having a breast MRI

## Information for patients

This leaflet contains information for patients and carers about having a breast MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan, including information on what to expect and how to prepare for the scan. If you have any other questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the team caring for you.

### **Confirming your identity**

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your name and date of birth and check your ID band. If you do not have an ID band, we will also ask you to confirm your address. If we do not ask these questions, then please ask us to check. Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

## What is a breast MRI?

A breast MRI is a medical imaging test that uses a powerful magnetic field and radio waves to produce detailed, cross-sectional pictures of the breast tissue. Unlike a mammogram, it does not use radiation.

A breast MRI is a supplementary tool that provides additional information about breast tissue. It does not replace mammograms or ultrasounds. It is used to:

- screen patients who have an increased risk of breast cancer
- further investigate abnormalities detected by mammograms and ultrasounds
- assess the extent of diagnosed cancer before planning treatment
- measure the effect of chemotherapy on breast cancers
- check the condition of breast implants

If you are still menstruating, your breast MRI scan will be scheduled between day 6 and day 16 of your menstrual cycle.

## Very high-risk breast screening patients

Very high-risk (VHR) breast screening patients include those who have a family history and/or an increased risk of developing breast cancer. Those patients are enrolled in an annual screening programme.

If you are menstruating and your cycle changes so your planned appointment is no longer between day 6 and day 16, please contact the VHR breast screening coordinators to adjust your appointment on **020 3299 2454** or by email at **kch-tr.familyhistoryandincreasedrisk@nhs.net**.

## How do I get ready for a breast MRI?

To prepare for your scan, you should continue with your regular diet and medications. On the day of the scan, you'll need to change into a hospital gown and remove all metal items, including jewellery, piercings, and watches. You should also avoid wearing makeup, as some cosmetics contain metal.

## What happens during the procedure?

- You'll lie on your stomach on a special table with your breasts placed in comfortable cups.
- A contrast dye (a special liquid) is injected into a vein in your arm to produce clearer images.
- The table will slide into the MRI scanner. You must remain completely still for the 15-minute scan.
- The scanner makes loud knocking noises, so you'll be given earplugs and headphones to reduce the sound.
- A radiographer will monitor you from a separate area, and you'll have a buzzer to get their attention if needed.

## How will I get my results?

- If you are having a very high risk (VHR) breast screening MRI, your results will be sent to you by post by the VHR breast screening coordinators about two weeks after your scan. You will be told if further imaging is needed at this time. If not, you will be contacted the following year for your annual scan. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the team on **020 3299 2454** or by email at **kch-tr.familyhistoryandincreasedrisk@nhs.net**
- If your breast MRI was ordered by a doctor at the symptomatic breast clinic, the results will be sent to that doctor. You will then be scheduled for an appointment to discuss them.
- Following a breast MRI, it's common to be called back for further investigation. While roughly 1 in 10 patients are recalled, most of these follow-up findings are not cause for concern.

## Are there any risks?

- There are no after-effects from the MRI scan itself, and you are free to drive and return to work should you wish.
- Allergic reactions to the contrast dye used in breast MRI scans are rare. The radiographer will explain in detail the benefits and risks of the contrast dye and will answer any questions you may have. If a reaction does occur, our team is fully trained to recognise it quickly and provide safe, prompt care.

**Please contact the MRI department on 020 3299 1797 if you have any further concerns or questions.**

## Consent

We must by law obtain your written consent to any procedures beforehand. Staff will explain all the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to sign a consent form. If you are unsure about any aspect of the treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to ask to speak with a senior member of staff.

## MyChart

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on 020 3299 4618 or email [kings.mychart@nhs.net](mailto:kings.mychart@nhs.net). Visit [www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart](http://www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart) to find out more.

## Sharing your information

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit [www.kch.nhs.uk](http://www.kch.nhs.uk).

## Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by imaging patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your imaging will not be affected by your decision.

## PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: 020 3299 4618  
Email: [kings.pals@nhs.net](mailto:kings.pals@nhs.net)

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email [kings.access@nhs.net](mailto:kings.access@nhs.net)**

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