

Information Leaflet on Small Bowel Magnetic Resonance Imaging Scan (MRI) for Patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease

This leaflet provides information on why a small bowel MRI scan is required, how the procedure is performed and what to expect during the scan.

What is the small bowel?

The small bowel is part of the digestive tract. Its function is to digest food and absorb nutrients after they have passed through the stomach. This particular scan will look inside the small bowel and take detailed pictures for the doctor to have a look at.

The small bowel is divided into three parts. The upper region is called the duodenum, the middle region is called the jejunum and the lower region is called the ileum. All three regions will be looked at during the scan.

Why is the scan needed?

The scan helps the doctor to understand why you have been feeling unwell. The scan will confirm if there is any active inflammation (sore areas) or narrowing within the small bowel.

How does the MRI scanner work?

The MRI scanner is a powerful magnet which looks like a short tunnel with openings at both ends. There is a bed within the scanner which slides in and out. When you are in the scanner it sends special messages called radio waves into the body, the body then sends tiny messages back to the scanner. These messages are collected and sent to a computer that creates the MRI pictures for your doctor to look at. This procedure is completely painless.

We will give you a separate information leaflet explaining in further detail what is involved before, during and after the MRI scan procedure.

Before the scan

You are not allowed to eat for four to six hours before the scan. You may only have small sips of water or very diluted squash during this time.

You can take all your medications as normal.

On arrival to the MRI Scanning Department

You will be asked to arrive in the department one hour before the scan. A member of staff will meet you and explain in full what will be happening before, during and after the scan.

Special drink

You will be asked to drink a special drink. This is to allow clearer pictures to be taken of the bowel. It is important to drink the full amount over one hour. Juice can be added to flavour the drink.

Cannula

After completing the drink a cannula will need to be inserted. A cannula is a small plastic tube that is inserted into a vein so that medication can be given to you. Special cream can be used to numb the skin before the cannula is inserted. If you are under the age of 12 years there is an option for the cannula to be inserted on the Children's Day Ward prior to going to the scanning department. This will be discussed in advance when the appointment for the scan is booked.

A cannula is needed so that special contrast fluid can be administered. This allows the blood vessels to show up more clearly in the small bowel and makes the pictures nice and clear. The contrast fluid will be given throughout the scanning procedure.

Once the scan is completed the cannula will be removed and a small plaster or dressing will be applied over the site.

What happens during the scan?

The scan can last up to 45 minutes. Most of this time will be in the actual scanner.

The bed within the scanner slides in and out during the scan.

It is important to stay very still while in the scanner so that the pictures taken are clear. The scanner will make different noises and at times these noises will be loud. The noise will not hurt you. Earplugs can be worn and you can listen to music of your choice.

The person doing the scan will not be in the same room as you but they will be able to talk to you via a microphone. You will be asked at times to hold your breath for short periods at a time. This allows much clearer pictures to be seen.

A parent or carer can be present in the same room at all times during the procedure. They will be able to talk to you and have contact with you.

How might I feel after the scan?

- Cramping, wind-like pain – you may experience this for the first 24 hours after the scan. This is caused by the drink. If this happens, you may take some pain relief. Paracetamol is usually all that is required, following the correct dose as stated on the bottle.
- Blurred vision or a dry mouth – these should last no longer than 20 minutes. They are caused by the contrast fluid given via the cannula. If you have these symptoms you will not be discharged home from the department until it is safe for you to leave.

Contact details

If you have any further questions regarding the scan, please contact either the MRI Appointments Office or the Children's Gastroenterology Specialist Nurses

MRI Appointments Office 01603 286107
(Monday to Friday, 09.00 to 17.00)

Email nnu-tr.mri@nhs.net

Children's Gastroenterology Specialist Nurses 01603 286320
(Monday to Friday, 09.00 to 17.00)

