

Questions You May Have Concerning Your MRI

Why do I need an MRI? MRIs (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) are an integral part of diagnosing and checking progression of MS lesions on the brain and spinal cord. Therefore, the physicians of MSCA order MRIs routinely. For some patients it may be one MRI a year. For others it may be as many as one MRI every 3 months or multiple MRIs at the same time. These MRIs allow the physicians to see where the lesions are and compare them to your last MRI for any changes. Lesions are scarring on the brain and/or spine. The location of the lesions will most likely determine in what areas you may experience the most challenge. As you can tell, MRIs will be important in determining the course of your treatment plan. Since Multiple Sclerosis is a chronic, lifelong disease, you will want to become very familiar with your insurance coverage benefits each new plan year.

What types of MRI's do you offer? We are able to perform MRIs of the brain and spine (cervical, thoracic and lumbar) and MRAs (MR Angiography, which analyses blood flow) of the head and neck.

What does an MRI machine look like? The MRI machine looks like a tube that is open on both ends. However, this is not an Open MRI. The machine has a movable table that slides you into the tube to be scanned.

How do I schedule an MRI? Your physician will let you know when you should have your next MRI and generate an order for it. If you are in the office at that time, you may schedule your MRI/MRA at the front desk as you check-out or, if more convenient, you may call the front desk during regular business hours. If you feel you may need financial assistance, please contact MSCA 6-8 weeks prior to your scheduled MRI to allow time to apply and complete the processing of your application before your appointment. It is your responsibility to schedule your MRI appointment; MSCA will not contact you to schedule it. If you are having an MRI at another location, please provide your medical assistant with the name, address and phone number of the facility to which you will be going and she will make the arrangements.

Do I need to schedule extra time for my MRI if I am in a wheelchair? Yes, if you are using a walker, scooter or wheelchairs, please alert the schedulers as additional time is required.

How often will I need an MRI? The frequency of MRIs is highly individualized based upon a patient's specific disease process. Your neurologist will determine how often and what type of MRI you need.

How long should I expect to be at MSCA when I come in for an MRI? You will be asked to arrive 30 minutes prior to your appointment to complete paper work and get prepared for your scan. Each individual scan lasts approximately 30 minutes. If you have more than one

MRI ordered you will be scanned for both at the same time. Then you will most likely see your physician after to review the results.

Will I be exposed to radiation during my scan? No

What if I have a problem with claustrophobia? Please alert your physician if you have difficulty with anxiety related to tight spaces or being scanned. Your physician may prescribe a mild sedative prior to the scan. **Please be aware that if you take a sedative, someone must drive you to and from your appointment.**

Can I wear jewelry when I have my MRI? Please do not come to your appointment with any jewelry, watches, hair pins, etc.

Is there anything that would keep me from getting an MRI? It is important to let the radiologist know if you have any metal implants as each case is unique. There are implants that may prevent you from having a MRI, such as pacemakers, spinal stimulators, Interstim (bladder control), DBS (deep brain stimulators), implantable pumps (Baclofen pumps are ok) and aneurysm clips. If you have any questions, please call MSCA prior to your appointment and ask to speak with a radiology technician. They will be able to determine if you may proceed with your MRI.

May I eat or drink anything before the MRI? It is suggested that you not eat or drink anything 2 hours before the scan if you are going to be given contrast.

What is contrast? Contrast is similar to a dye that is administered intravenously in order to enhance the view of the brain and spine. Although many MRIs are ordered with contrast, not all are.

Can I be allergic to the contrast and if so, what are my options? 1 in 10,000 people have adverse events with MRI contrast. It is important to let your physician know if you have had a reaction to contrast in the past. They will be able to discuss options with you.

Will I need someone to come with me to my appointment? If you take a sedative, someone must drive you to and from your appointment. You will also need to have someone drive you if you need physical assistance. Please note: MSCA employees are only able to assist a patient to or from their car if the patient is able to transfer into and out of the MSCA wheelchair on their own.

When will I know the results of my MRI? Most patients will have an office visit scheduled directly after they are scanned in which the physician will review the results. If not and you would like to know the results of your MRI prior to your next physician appointment, please call the office and speak with your physician's medical assistant.