

MRI with Pacemaker

Welcome to VCU Health MRI. We are located in the Gateway Building Basement, Main Hospital 3rd Floor, ACC Basement and North Hospital Ground Floor. Our hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7:00 am to 10:30 pm, and Saturday and Sunday 7:00 am to 7:30 pm. Advanced scheduling is required for all MRI exams. Please review the following information about your test. Please call (804) 628-3580 to schedule your test or if you have any questions about your MRI exam.

What is it?

Imaging to look at various structures in the body with and/or without the administration of gadolinium contrast. Patients with pacemakers previously could not be scanned. However, new pacemakers have been designed to withstand MRI scans safely. Also, it has been determined that many of the older pacemakers can be scanned safely under the proper conditions.

Why are you having this test?

An MRI is used to visualize various structures and tissue types within the body. Because it provides a high level of detail, an MRI is preferred for a wide variety of purposes. Your doctor has decided that an MRI is necessary to visualize a specific part of your body to determine whether pathology is present.

Preparing for the test

- Pacemaker clearance process must be begun prior to the day of scan. This will be handled by VCU Health as long as you have notified your doctor that you have a pacemaker.
- Take your medications as prescribed.
- Bring a picture ID and your insurance information.
- Bring information about any implants you may have inside your body, including the card for your pacemaker and leads.
- Please arrive 60 minutes before your scheduled appointment.

What to expect during the test

- A radiologist will explain the procedure and get your consent.

- You may need to have a chest x-ray done before the MRI to confirm that the placement of pacemaker leads is safe for MRI.
- A representative from the company that made your pacemaker will check the device and switch it to a different mode or turn it off if necessary.
- The test will take 30 minutes or more.
- If you have multiple MRI studies scheduled, they will take about 30 minutes each.
- You may or may not receive intravenous gadolinium contrast.
- A needle (IV) will be placed in a vein, whether or not contrast is being used.
- Your heart rate, blood pressure and blood oxygen content will be monitored by a nurse throughout the exam. Rescue medications will be on hand in case of any issues.
- You will lie down inside of a tube on a flat table for the duration of the exam.
- It is very important to hold still for the exam, or the pictures will not be readable.
- Contrast will be administered at some point during the scan if your test requires contrast.
- If you are claustrophobic, or have pain issues that may interfere with your ability to stay still, talk to your doctor BEFORE scheduling your MRI.

After Care information

- The representative from your device's manufacturer will put your pacemaker back into normal operating mode and check the device.
- You may return to all your normal activities.
- MRI contrast is expelled from the body through your urine. If you receive MRI contrast, drinking extra fluids may help the contrast leave your body faster.

Follow-up care after the procedure

- Results will be available in 1-2 business days.
- For Results: Please contact the physician that ordered your test.