Patient Guide to Cardiovascular MRI

VanderbiltHeart
WHAT IS AN MRI?

MRI is an imaging technology that uses natural, harmless magnets and radio waves to take remarkably clear pictures of the heart and blood vessels without the need for x-rays. An MRI scan provides images that assist your doctor in diagnosing your condition with increased accuracy to determine the most appropriate course of treatment.

BEFORE YOUR MRI SCAN

To provide you with the highest level of care, the MRI staff will need certain information about you and your medical history. Prior to the scan, you will be asked to complete a safety screening form asking about possible metal in your body.

While most coronary artery stents, surgical clips, wires and most heart valves are safe in the MRI scanner, MRI is NOT advisable for patients who have any of the following:

- Pacemakers or Defibrillators
- Cerebral or Brain Aneurysm Clips
- Cochlear or Ear Implants
- Metal Fragments in the Eyes
- Metal Fragment, Shrapnel or Foreign Body near a Vital Organ
- Electronic or Magnetically Activated Implants or Stimulators
If you have or think you have metal in your body or if you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, please call us prior to your appointment - (615) 936-8000.

We realize that cancellations are at times unavoidable, and ask that you notify us at least 24 hours in advance.

**The Day of Your MRI Scan**

For most individuals, no special preparation is required before your scan. You may eat and drink before the scan; however, avoid carbonated beverages or coffee since they might increase the chance that you would have to stop in the middle of your scan to use the bathroom. Take your medicine as usual (unless instructed otherwise). If you are taking a diuretic or “water pill” and are scheduled for a morning MRI appointment, consider taking your diuretic after your scan is complete.

Allow extra time to arrive for your scan due to the possibility of unexpected traffic or parking delays.

When you arrive, a staff member will explain the scanning procedure to you. You will be provided a private dressing room with a secure locker where you can store your belongings. Before the scan, you will change into a gown and remove all metallic items, such as jewelry, watches, dentures and hearing aides. Please leave valuables at home or with a family member.
**YOUR MRI SCAN**

An MRI scan is simple, easy and safe. MRI for scans are individualized and tailored to each patient’s condition and last between 30-60 minutes. Stereo headphones are provided for you to listen to your choice of music during the scan. You may bring your own music CD if you’d like.

For this test you will lie on a padded table that slides into the scanner. While the scanner is operating, you will hear buzzing and knocking noises. When the scanner is quiet, the staff is adjusting it for the next set of pictures. At all times during the scan, you will be in communication with our staff.

In some cases, a contrast agent may be injected through a vein in your arm to make the details of your pictures clearer. Do not be concerned about whether you receive contrast or not. If you receive a contrast agent we will monitor you to make sure that you do not have an allergic reaction. Allergies to contrast are extremely rare - about 1 in 400,000.

**AFTER YOUR MRI SCAN**

You will be able to leave immediately after your scan and continue your normal daily routine. The results of your scan will be sent to your physician who will contact you regarding your results.
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Does an MRI scan hurt?**
No. MRI scans are painless and you will not feel any pain while the scan is in progress. Some MRI scans may require an injection of a contrast agent through an i.v. or needle.

**Do dental fillings pose problems?**
No, not for cardiovascular MRI scans.

**Why isn’t this an “open” magnet?**
You have been referred to the Vanderbilt Cardiovascular MRI Lab to receive the very best possible images, taken on a state-of-the-art scanner with a tubular design which encircles the patient but is open at both ends providing plenty of light and air flow. An average sized person does not touch the sides of the scanner. “Open magnets” only cover the top of the patient leaving the sides open. They operate at a lower magnetic field strength than tubular magnets, and therefore, the image quality is not as good.

**Will the MRI be covered under my insurance?**
VMC accepts Medicare and most commercial and group medical insurance plans. An MRI may require pre-certification from your insurance carrier. Depending on your insurance plan, your primary care physician may need to provide a referral even though your cardiologist or cardiothoracic surgeon has ordered the scan. All pre-certifications need to be completed prior to your appointment. If you have questions about your insurance coverage, check with your insurance carrier or call (615) 936-8000 before your MRI appointment. As a courtesy to our patients, we will bill your primary and secondary plans. However, you will be responsible for deductibles and co-pay percentages related to your MRI scan as defined by your insurance plan. If this is your first visit to Vanderbilt, remember to bring your insurance card.
The Vanderbilt Heart Cardiovascular MRI Lab is located in The Vanderbilt Clinic at 1301 Medical Center Drive. Please use our FREE VALET PARKING located at the entrance to the building.

Valet parking is always free.

If you choose to self-park, remember to have your ticket stamped at the registration desk for complimentary parking.
This closeup map will help you find The Vanderbilt Clinic. Our lab is located in this building. Stop at the information desk as you enter the building for specific directions to the lab.

If you have trouble finding the lab, please call (615) 936-8000.