

About Magnetic Resonance Cholangiopancreatography (MRCP)

What You Need to Know and Do

Magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography (MRCP) is a special type of MRI test. MRI is a noninvasive test that lets your doctor see detailed pictures of the inside of your body, including your liver, pancreas, and bile ducts.

It uses strong magnets and radio waves to form a picture. A special dye (contrast) is used to help make the pictures. The pictures help your doctor diagnose medical conditions.

If your MRI test is ordered with a special dye (contrast) it contains a metal called gadolinium. Small amounts of gadolinium can stay in your body for a long time (several months to years). It is not known how gadolinium may affect you. If you have concerns or questions about gadolinium, please contact your doctor.

What should I do before my appointment?

You will need to stop eating and drinking at least 6 hours before the test. You may also need to stop taking your medicine before the test. Each type of MRI exam is different. Talk to us before your test to find out how you need to prepare.

MRI uses strong magnets. Metal is affected by magnets and can distort the pictures that are taken. It is important to let us know if you have any metal objects in your body. The MRI magnets may cause them to move during the test.

Be sure to tell the radiologist or technologist if you:

- have had any previous surgeries, especially if you have implanted metal devices
- have a pacemaker, surgical clips, metal plate or pins, an artificial joint, staples, or screws
- wear a medicated adhesive patch
- have metal splinters in your body
- have implanted nerve stimulators or drug-infusion ports
- have tattoos or body piercings. Ink contains metal.
- work with metal
- have braces. You must remove any removable dental work.
- have a bullet or other metal in your body.

It might not be safe to have any type of MRI test if you have an implant. If you have an implant that is safe, please bring documentation for your implant to your appointment.

Types of implants include:

- ear (cochlear)
- metallic clips used for brain aneurysms
- metallic coils put in blood vessels
- cardiac defibrillators

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- cardiac pacemakers
- pain pumps
- nerve/brain/bladder stimulators.

Also tell the radiologist or technologist if you:

- are or think you may be pregnant, or if you are breastfeeding
- are afraid of small, enclosed spaces (claustrophobic). You may have your referring doctor prescribe anti-anxiety medicine which you can bring with you and take after you arrive for your scan. If you do, you must have someone drive you home after the scan.
- have other allergies, including any reactions to contrast dye (Gadolinium)
- have had cancer
- have serious health problems, including kidney disease or a liver transplant. You may not be able to have the contrast material used for MRI.

When should I arrive for my appointment?

You will need to arrive at least 30 minutes before your appointment time to check in and complete paperwork.

You will be asked to remove all objects from your body, including jewelry, eyeglasses, hearing aids, and any metal objects.

You may be asked to remove your makeup. Some makeup contains metal.

What happens during my MRCP test?

You will be asked to wear a hospital gown. You may be given earplugs or headphones to wear during the test.

You may get contrast dye as something to drink or through an IV.

If you get it through an IV, a nurse or technologist will insert the IV and the dye will be injected.

You will lie down on a platform that slides into the magnet. You may have a device placed over the area of interest. You may be asked to hold your breath during parts of the test.

The test usually takes 30 to 60 minutes, but could take longer.

What happens after my test?

You can usually go back to your normal activities and eat the food you normally eat. If you were given the dye, drink more water for 24 hours after the exam.