A Patient’s Guide to

Cardiac MR Imaging

Advances in technology...

diagnosis you can trust.

MRI of the heart is a safe, non-invasive way to look at your heart and detect heart disease.
What is a cardiac MRI?
Cardiac MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is a safe, non-invasive way to look at the structure and function of your heart. There is no radiation involved in the test. MRI allows the cardiac imaging physician to look at how your heart beats and to see the parts of your heart at risk for heart disease.

What can a cardiac MRI tell your doctor?
- If areas of your heart are at risk or have been damaged due to a prior heart attack
- How effectively your heart pumps blood
- If areas of your heart don’t get enough blood
- If the structure of your heart is normal
- If your heart valves are normal or are not functioning properly

Can anyone get a cardiac MRI?
Most people are good candidates for this test. People who are not appropriate for MRI include those:
- with severe claustrophobia
- who cannot lie flat for the test
- who have an implanted epicardial pacer wire
- who have a pacemaker or implanted defibrillator
- who cannot have intravenous dye due to kidney damage

How long does the cardiac MRI test take?
- The test time ranges between 45 minutes to 1.5 hours, depending on what your doctor is looking for.
What is involved in a cardiac MRI test?
The MRI test is simple. There are 6 steps:

**Step 1: Your doctor orders the test.**
- Your physician will determine if you would benefit from the test.

**Step 2: Intravenous (IV) line**
- An IV is placed into your arm, usually near the elbow.

**Step 3: Breath-holding instructions**
- You will be instructed how to hold your breath for the test. There are many parts of the test where you will need to hold your breath for 15-20 seconds.

**Step 4: Medication**
- If your doctor has a concern about poor blood supply to your heart, you may be given a medication through the IV to “stress” the heart and allow detection of the damaged blood vessel. The medication may cause dizziness or shortness of breath, but it wears off quickly.

**Step 5: Intravenous contrast**
- The IV “dye” or contrast is given through your IV line. You may have a warm feeling, flushing or a metallic taste in your mouth, but it will not last long.

**Step 6: Computer generation of images and interpretation**
- After you go home, a radiologist and/or cardiologist processes the MRI images, interprets the study and sends the report to your doctor.
If you have any questions about this test, please contact your doctor or call MRI scheduling at 203.688.5188

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