

Magnetic Resonance (MR) Enterography

Preparation Guide

This guide covers what you need to do to get the best MRI exam of your small bowel. The guide includes the following:

- What MR enterography (MRI of the small bowel) is
- How to prepare for your MRI of the small bowel
- What to expect during your MRI of the small bowel
- What happens after your MRI of the small bowel
- The MRI safety screening process

Please use this guide to answer questions you might have about MR Enterography (also known as MRI of the small bowel). Someone from the MRI staff will call you a few days before your exam to answer questions and talk about how to prepare for your exam.

Medical Words Used in this Guide

Some words in this guide might be new to you. Let's go over what those words mean.

Bowel: Another name for intestines, the part of the body where digestion takes place. When you eat food, it passes through your bowel (small intestine) where it is converted into energy your body needs.

Contrast Agent: A substance used to enhance the visible contrast of structures or fluids within the body in medical imaging. It is often used to make the bowels clear in MRI images.

Enterography: A type of imaging exam that uses MRI to take pictures of your small bowel. Contrast agent helps make the pictures clearer.

Intravenous catheter: A small tube that is used to pump medicine or contrast agent into the bloodstream by way of the veins. Intravenous means "through the veins".

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging): A type of imaging exam where patients are put into a large magnet that is connected to a computer. The magnet sends a signal to special signal detectors, called "coils", that are placed like a blanket on the part of the body that doctors want to look at. The magnet signal passes through the coils and is picked up by the computer. The computer converts the signal into the pictures the doctors will use to look at your bowel.

Important Contact Info

If you have any questions or concerns about your MR enterography exam or what is in this guide, call the MRI Department at 617-732-7970.

What is MR Enterography?

MR Enterography (also known as MRI of the small bowel) is an imaging exam that lets doctors look at problems in the structure of the small bowel or problems with how it is working. MR Enterography is done in an MRI machine. During the exam, you will lie on a special MRI table. An MRI technologist will slide the table into the MRI machine until your body is in the correct location for taking pictures of your abdomen.

How do I prepare for MR Enterography?

To prepare for your MR Enterography, don't eat or drink anything beginning 6 hours before your scheduled exam. It is ok to have a small sip of water with any medications you need to take.

Arrive at the MRI Department 1 hour before the time your exam is scheduled for. When you arrive, the MRI staff will give you an oral contrast agent to drink, along with some water. The contrast agent fills your belly and bladder with fluid that helps make the pictures of your small bowel clearer. You may use the restroom prior to your exam.

What should I expect during the exam?

MR Enterography lasts about 30 minutes. Most patients don't have any discomfort with the exam. When you arrive at the MRI Department one hour before your scheduled exam, you will first change into a hospital gown. Before you are brought into the MRI room, an intravenous catheter will be placed in your arm so that contrast agent can be injected during the exam. Once in the MRI room, you will lie on your back on the MRI table. The imaging coil will be placed on your belly like a blanket. The MRI staff person will slide the table into the MRI machine until your body is at the correct position.

As the magnet is working, it makes a loud repetitive knocking sound. You will be given ear plugs or headphones to reduce the noise. At this point, the MRI staff will leave the room and move to the MRI control room. MRI staff members will be watching and listening to you at all times during your exam and you will be able to get their attention by pressing an emergency call button.

The exam begins when the contrast agent is injected through the catheter. You will be instructed to hold your breath for two or three seconds at a time so that your belly is still while the MRI makes an image. You will not feel anything from the MRI taking the pictures.

Are there any risks with MR Enterography?

There are no risks associated with MR Enterography.

What happens after my MR Enterography?

After the exam is complete, one of the MRI staff will bring you to the changing area to gather your belongings. You can leave as soon as you are ready. Most enterography patients can eat their normal diet and take part in normal activities when they leave the MRI department. Check with your doctor for any special instructions he or she may have for you.

A radiologist will look at the pictures from your exam and will complete a report. The report will be sent to your physician within 24 hours of your exam. Your physician will discuss the results with you.

What is the MRI safety screening process?

You will receive a phone call from an MRI Department staff person a few days before your exam. This call is to find out if you have any metal implants in your body or if you worked with metal in the past. Some versions of the following items cannot be brought into the MRI room, so it is important that you inform the MRI staff if you have any of the following in your body:

- Pacemaker
- Defibrillator
- Aneurysm clip
- Hearing devices/Cochlear implants
- Heart valve implants
- Wire mesh implant
- Have worked with metal in the past

You will also be asked if you have a history of kidney disease. This is so the staff will know if it is safe to give you the contrast agent. If you have a history of kidney disease, you may need a blood test to find out if you can safely undergo the exam.