



Breast MRIs for Breast Cancer Screening

What is a breast MRI?

A **breast MRI** (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) uses magnets and radio waves to take detailed pictures of your breasts. It helps doctors see areas that may not show up clearly on a mammogram or breast ultrasound.

Why would I need a breast MRI?

You might be recommended for a breast MRI if you are at increased risk for breast cancer or if your doctor wants a closer look after other imaging. Common reasons include:

- You have a genetic mutation that increases your breast cancer risk, such as *BRCA1* or *BRCA2*
- You have a lifetime breast cancer risk of 20% or higher (based on tools like the Tyrer-Cuzick score)
- Several of your close relatives have had breast cancer
- You've had radiation treatment to your chest before age 30, for previous cancer treatment
- You are at increased risk for breast cancer and have very dense breast tissue, which can make mammograms harder to read
- You're being monitored after treatment for breast cancer



A breast MRI doesn't replace mammograms. For people at higher risk, doctors often recommend alternating an MRI and a mammogram every 6 months to keep close watch for any changes.

What is it like to get a breast MRI?



Before your appointment

- Avoid using deodorants, antiperspirants, perfumes, powders, or lotions on your breasts or underarms. These can affect the MRI images.
- If you're claustrophobic, let your Color Medical care team know. They can recommend the imaging center use an MRI machine with a larger diameter tunnel (sometimes called "wide-opening MRI" or "wide-bore MRI"), or discuss medication options to help you relax.
- You'll be asked to remove any metal objects, like jewelry or piercings.
- You may need to change into a gown or hospital-issued robe before the exam.



During the exam

- You'll lie face down on a cushioned table with openings for your breasts. The table will slide into the MRI machine.
- The technologist will help position you so that your breasts are in the best position for clear images. Your arms may be placed above your head or by your sides.
- If you feel uncomfortable, let the technologist know - they can adjust your position or use padding to help you stay comfortable.
- You may receive an injection through an IV of a contrast dye called gadolinium to help highlight breast tissue.
- The MRI machine will make loud tapping or thumping sounds during the scan. You'll likely be given earplugs or headphones to help reduce the noise.
- The scan usually takes 30–60 minutes. Try to stay as still as possible to ensure clear images.
- The technologist will also explain each step and stay in contact with you throughout the exam. You'll be able to talk to them at any time using an intercom, and they can pause if you need a break.



After the exam

- If you received contrast dye, you might notice a warm or tingling sensation for a short time.
- You can return to your normal activities right away.
- Drink plenty of water over the next day to help flush the contrast dye from your body.
- Your care team will review your images and share your results with you within a few days.



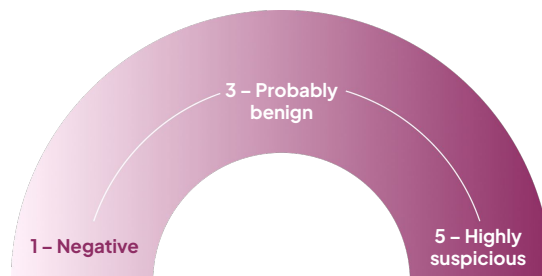
Where can I get a breast MRI done?

Most breast MRIs are performed in imaging centers, either in a hospital radiology department, independent imaging center, or high-risk breast center. If you've had a mammogram, we can try to schedule you at the same place for your breast MRI, when available.

What are the possible results from a breast MRI?

Your results will be classified using the BI-RADS system, which helps describe what was seen on the MRI:

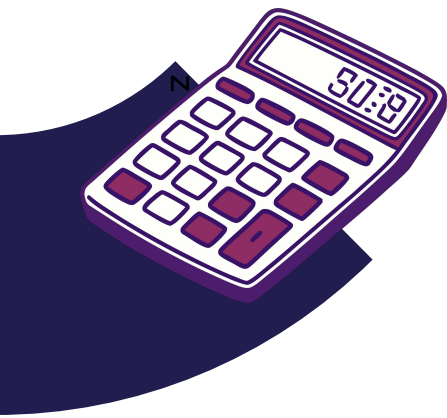
BI-RADS Category	What It Means	Next Steps
1 – Negative	Normal	Continue regular screening
2 – Benign finding	Non-cancerous change	No action needed
3 – Probably benign	Low chance of cancer	Repeat MRI in ~6 months
4 – Suspicious	Needs further testing	Usually a biopsy is recommended
5 – Highly suspicious	Very likely cancer	Biopsy to confirm and plan treatment



What is an abbreviated breast MRI?

An abbreviated breast MRI is a shorter version of a traditional breast MRI. It uses the same type of magnetic imaging, but in less time. The scan usually takes about 10 to 15 minutes and still provides high-quality images that can help find changes in the breast that may not show up on a mammogram or ultrasound. Unlike traditional breast MRI, abbreviated breast MRIs are not often covered by insurance.

How much does a breast MRI cost? Is it likely to be covered by my insurance?



The cost of a breast MRI can vary widely depending on the reason you need one, where you get it, whether contrast dye is used, and your insurance coverage. Typically, insurance plans cover breast MRIs for people who are considered high risk for breast cancer. For example, those with a known high-risk breast cancer gene mutation, a strong family history, or a calculated lifetime risk of 20% or higher.

Your Color care team will check your specific plan's coverage for breast MRI, as well as any potential out-of-pocket costs you may have. We may need to request approval (i.e. prior authorization) from your insurance company before scheduling your MRI so it can be covered for you. In this case, your Color care team will handle that directly in coordination with the facility where you will have your breast MRI done. They will share updates with you ahead of your appointment.

How does breast MRI compare to other screening methods, like a mammogram or breast ultrasound?

Test	How it works	What it's best for	Key points
Mammogram	Uses low-dose X-rays	Best for seeing tiny calcium spots (early signs of cancer)	Main screening test for most average-risk women over age 40; quick and widely available
Ultrasound	Uses sound waves	Best for checking areas seen on mammogram or in dense breast tissue	Often used as a follow-up to check one area, or for women who can't have an MRI
Breast MRI	Uses magnets and contrast dye	Best for finding cancers that might not show up on mammogram or ultrasound	Very sensitive, can find more cancers, but can also show harmless spots that lead to more tests