What is an MRI?

MRI, (also called Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is a very advanced medical imaging technique that produces clear pictures or images of the body. It is an excellent way to diagnose diseases of the brain, spine, skeleton, chest, abdomen, pelvis and blood vessels. The MRI works by reading radio waves that are produced by the magnetic field as it passed around the body. The radio waves are picked up by a powerful antenna located inside the machine which sends them to a computer. The computer performs millions of calculations based on the radio waves to produce a black and white image for diagnosis.

How do I prepare for the procedure?

You should wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing for your exam. Please avoid wearing clothing with zippers and snaps. You will be asked to remove your eyeglasses, jewelry, dentures, hearing aids, metallic make-up and any other metallic objects you are carrying. Metal can affect the quality of the image and can cause discomfort or injury to you. For your personal safety, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire informing us of your medical history including some medical devices and /or metallic substances that may exclude you from having the exam.

What does the equipment look like?

The MRI is a large machine with a hole in the center like a doughnut. The system has an attractive design; soft colors and well-lit openings at both ends which help patients relax and minimize claustrophobia.

How is the procedure performed?

The technologist will ask you to lie down on a cushioned table. Depending on the body part being studied, a contrast material (x-ray dye) may need to be injected through an IV. The contrast helps to make the images more clear. A device called a “coil” will be placed over or under you. The coil is specialized to produce clear pictures of the area being imaged. Once you are comfortably positioned, the table will move through the magnet. The technologist will step into the control area, but will stay in constant contact with you visually through a window and audibly through an intercom. During the exam you will hear a muffled thumping sound for several minutes at a time. The noise is produced by the magnets as they move and is nothing to be concerned about. You will need to lie still, because movement will blur the picture. The exam usually takes 30-60 minutes for each body part being studied.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist will analyze the images and provide your physician with the interpretation. **Your personal physician will inform you of the results.**