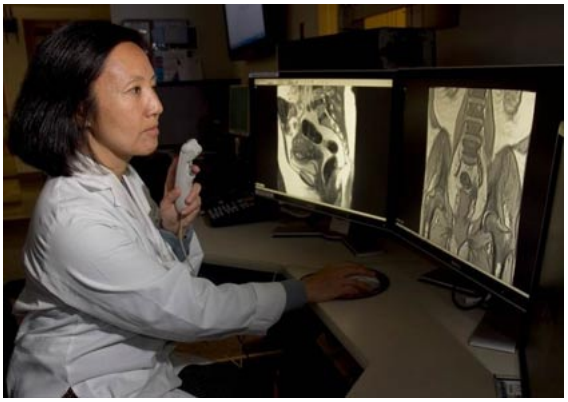
MRI Safety During Pregnancy

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)



If you become ill during pregnancy, both you and your unborn child become patients. Before treatment, your doctor must determine your medical needs and health conditions that could be affecting you and your baby. Your doctor may want to order a magnetic resonance imaging (http://www.radiologyinfo.org) (MRI) exam for you.

Why do you need an MRI?

Your doctor may order an MRI if you have symptoms that require treatment or exam results that need clarification but cannot wait until after the delivery of your baby.

Alternatives to MRI

Ultrasound (http://www.radiologyinfo.org) is the most commonly used imaging exam during pregnancy. It uses sound waves to produce images. However, if ultrasound does not provide a clear answer, or if other parts of your body need to be imaged, an MRI exam may be needed to obtain the information your doctor needs.

Computed tomography (http://www.radiologyinfo.org) (CT) exams may be performed safely during pregnancy. However, because CT uses x-ray radiation, ultrasound or MRI is preferred.

MRI risks during pregnancy

There are no proven risks to pregnant women or unborn babies from MRI exams. Over the last 30 years, thousands of pregnant women have had MRI exams, and no known harmful effects to the baby have been found.

You should not refuse an MRI exam necessary for diagnosing your potentially serious or urgent illness because of fear of the exam. The most important factor in having a healthy baby is ensuring a healthy mother. The baby depends on the mother to stay well and carry her pregnancy to term.

Contrast material

For some MRI exams, a contrast material (http://www.radiologyinfo.org) called gadolinium (http://www.radiologyinfo.org) will need to be injected into a vein in the arm.

While contrast material sometimes improves the MRI images, it is not normally used during pregnancy. Contrast material will only be used for the exam if it is necessary to answer your doctor's questions. A radiologist (a doctor with expertise in medical imaging) will be consulted before the procedure to ensure the contrast is necessary.

MRI during pregnancy

An illness is not pleasant, and a significant illness during pregnancy can be especially serious. However, the baby depends on the

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mother to stay healthy and to carry her pregnancy to term. If helping the mother become better means performing an MRI exam, then it will benefit the baby's health as well.

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