

MRI Lower Extremity



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What is a Lower Extremity MRI?

MR imaging uses a powerful magnetic field, radio waves and a computer to produce detailed pictures of organs, soft tissues, bone and virtually all other internal body structures. The images are interpreted on computer and upon request can be transferred to a CD. MRI does not use radiation. Normally when an MRI is performed, a joint is included in the image as a point of reference.

Anatomy Visualized: foot, ankle, lower leg, knee, thigh and hip.

CPT Codes

Joint (most common)		Non Joint (foot, thigh, lower leg)	
73721	Without Contrast	73718	Without Contrast
73722	With Contrast (rarely ordered)	73719	With Contrast
73723	Without and With Contrast	73720	With and Without Contrast

Indications

Without Contrast: pain, injury, instability and limited range of motion, arthritis

With and Without Contrast: bone and soft tissue masses, infection of the bone and soft tissue

Contraindications

Patients with cardiac pacemakers, ICD, or neuro-stimulators **CAN NOT** have an MRI.

Patients with pins, plates, screws and joint replacements can have an MRI as long as it has been **6 weeks** since placement of the device.

Patients with stents and filters can have an MRI as long as it has been at least **6-8 weeks** since placement of the device.

Women who are pregnant should avoid having an elective MRI. Women who are pregnant and need an MRI should be individually evaluated for risk vs. benefits and should avoid an MRI in the 1st trimester of pregnancy.

How Does Your Patient Prepare?

For all contrast MRI's:

A current creatinine (within 45 days) is needed on all patients over the age of 60, as well as patients that have high blood pressure, diabetes, acute vascular disease, or a history of kidney disease. **Please fax these results with the order.**

The creatinine level is used to determine the patient's renal risk ratio. This ratio determines which type of contrast, if any, is to be used.

Patients will need to remove all jewelry, hairclips, pony-tails and bobby pins. In addition, the patient will need to remove all clothing containing metal. This would include bras with metal enclosures and jeans with metal zippers and buttons. Your patient will be provided a gown and a secure locker in which valuables can be placed.

For extreme cases of claustrophobia or pain, an oral sedative or IV conscious sedation is available. Patients that cannot complete an MRI study without IV conscious sedation will be risk evaluated on an individual basis by a radiologist. We require that a current physical and history has been performed within 30 days. Patients diagnosed with sleep apnea or who wear a CPAP while sleeping will not be candidates for conscious sedation. If conscious sedation is determined appropriate, we will contact you, request and order, and re-schedule your patient's MRI. A driver will be needed for patients receiving any type of sedation. Patients receiving conscious sedation should plan a 3-4 hour appointment time to include recovery.

What Happens During the Test?

Your patient will be asked to lie down on his back on the scanning table. The table will then slide into the scanning area. During the test, the MRI will make a rapid tapping noise. Some MRI examinations may require an injection of contrast material into a vein in the arm. Your patient's experience and comfort are of key importance. Therefore, our patients are offered earplugs or a music headset; in addition blankets are also available. Your patient should relax and remain still during the exam. Your patient may resume normal activities following the MRI.

Your patient should plan 60-90 minutes of total clinic time. The scan time can vary from 30-60 minutes depending on the study.

The Results

A radiologist will analyze the images and send a signed report to the referring physician within 1 business day.

(Information adapted from www.radiologyinfo.org and Dr. James Choi)

This manual is intended for use as merely a guideline for referring physicians and their staff only. It contains information pertaining to the most commonly ordered exams and indications. However, Iowa Radiology does not recommend any particular examination. Individual radiologist preference or patient circumstances may dictate ordering alternative studies. Although contrast codes are not needed to place an order, the following contrast codes may be used in placing orders: CT Contrast Q9967, MRI contrast A9577 and A9579.