

MRI and Legacy Pacemaker

You are scheduled for a MRI to monitor, diagnose, or rule out a health concern.

While planning for your appointment, we noted you are implanted with a heart pacemaker or implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) that has not been given MRI safety labeling by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This means your device was not specifically designed to enter the MRI scanner's magnetic field, or you might have another part like a leftover wire from a previous device. Thousands of patients worldwide with devices like yours have had successful and uneventful MRI exams with low risk, including over 800 patients at UW Health.

Our radiologist and an electrophysiology doctor from UW Health's Device Clinic have reviewed your medical records and past interrogation reports. They agree MRI is a reasonable way to get the information needed by your doctor to manage your medical condition. No one is forcing you to have an MRI. You can ask the medical team for other scanning options.

Patients implanted with cardiac pacemakers or ICDs may only be scheduled for MRI appointments at University Hospital.

Risks

In theory, having an MRI scan with a heart pacemaker or ICD not approved for MRI can potentially damage the device. It is important you understand these low risks.

- There is a <1% chance the device or leads could be damaged.
- There is a 3-5% chance that after having the MRI, your device may need and use more energy to pace your heart.

- There may be a small decrease in battery life which may require an earlier replacement of device.
- If there is permanent damage to the device, it is possible your insurance may not cover the cost of replacing it. However, this is unlikely, and to our knowledge, has not happened in over 800 MRI exams at UW with a pacemaker or ICD like yours. We have had just one case of reset of an ICD, which is like a computer that froze and reset itself, with no harm to the patient.

Appointment Day

Please arrive 30 minutes prior to the MRI exam.

During this time, the radiologist will talk to you giving you another chance to ask questions. You then will be asked to sign an electronic consent acknowledging:

- You have had a chance to ask questions and understand the responses.
- You understand UW Health cannot be held responsible/liable for an earlier replacement of a battery or device if it is damaged and needs replacement.
- You understand there is a chance your insurance may not cover the cost of a new replacement device.
- You understand that you can ask for other imaging options including not having an MRI scan.

Once you have signed the electronic consent, the Device Clinic RN will interrogate and program your device for MRI. The doctor in the device clinic is aware of the settings the device RN uses to

program your device. A nurse will monitor your heart rhythm during the MRI. The device clinic RN will interrogate and reprogram your device back to its original settings once the MRI is completed.

Who to Call

If you have any questions regarding the function of your pacemaker/ICD in MRI, please call the Device Clinic at:
(608) 263-1530.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 4/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8345.