

MR Cholangiopancreatography



What is MRCP?

Magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography (MRCP) is a special kind of MRI test. Your healthcare provider uses it to look at the biliary and pancreatic system. This includes the pancreas, the pancreatic duct, the bile ducts, gallbladder, and liver. The procedure uses a combination of magnets, radio waves, and a computer to make detailed images. A contrast dye may be used for even better images.

MRCP is:

- Noninvasive. This means it's not done with a cut (incision) or tool that goes inside the body.
- Doesn't use radiation
- Gives highly detailed images
- Helpful for diagnosis and treatment

Why might I need MRCP?

MRCP is used to diagnose or assess conditions, such as:

- Stones in the biliary or pancreatic ducts
- Tumors
- Inflammation of the gallbladder, bile duct, liver, pancreatic duct, or pancreas (pancreatitis)

MRCP may also be used to find out the cause of stomach pain.

It's often combined with a standard MRI. Talk with your healthcare provider about the reason for the test.

What are the risks of MRCP?

MRCP is a safe test. It has only a few risks:

- The MRCP test doesn't use contrast. But if the test is combined with a standard MRI, you may be given IV (intravenous) contrast. If you have severe kidney disease, you may get scarring in your body from the contrast. Your kidney function will be tested before contrast is used to determine if you should not get the contrast dye.
- Problems with implanted metal pieces or devices. This is because of the magnetic fields used to capture images.
- Allergic reaction to contrast material, if used.

If you are or could be pregnant, tell your healthcare provider. There may be other risks, depending on your specific medical condition. Discuss any concerns with your provider before the procedure.

How do I get ready for MRCP?

Your healthcare provider will give you instructions on how to prepare for your MRCP. Those instructions may include

- Fasting for several hours before the procedure
- Wearing loose-fitting clothes that have no metal fasteners or zippers

- Leaving all jewelry and metal accessories and other objects at home. These include barrettes, hair pins, and any dental work that can be removed.
- Arranging to have someone drive you home after the procedure if you're to get sedation

You'll also need to discuss your health history with your provider before the test, including:

- Any long-term (chronic) health conditions, such as kidney disease and diabetes.
- Any medical implants that you have, such as metal plates or screws, a pacemaker, or an artificial heart valve
- Any past surgeries
- Any allergies
- A history of anxiety about being in closed spaces

What happens during MRCP?

- You'll lie on a table. You may be held in position with straps to keep you from moving. Moving would distort the images. You may have coils placed around you that will help to send radio waves.
- If you're having the procedure with contrast dye, you'll have an IV (intravenous) line started to give the dye.
- The table will slide into the MRI machine to capture images of your stomach.
- The radiologist or technologist will guide the procedure from a computer outside of the MRI room. But they will be able to hear you, speak with you, and see you at all times using a two-way intercom.
- The machine is very loud. Ear plugs or headphones are often given.

The entire test usually takes about 45 minutes. MRCP may be done outpatient, needing no hospital stay, or as part of a hospital stay.

What happens after MRCP?

If you weren't sedated, you won't need any recovery time, and you can usually resume your normal activities right away. If you were sedated, it may take a few hours for the sedation to wear off, and someone will need to drive you home.

Next steps

Before you agree to the test or procedure make sure you know:

- The name of the test or procedure
- The reason you are having the test or procedure
- What results to expect and what they mean
- The risks and benefits of the test or procedure
- What the possible side effects or complications are
- When and where you are to have the test or procedure
- Who will do the test or procedure and what that person's qualifications are
- What would happen if you did not have the test or procedure
- Any alternative tests or procedures to think about

- When and how you will get the results
- Who to call after the test or procedure if you have questions or problems
- How much you will have to pay for the test or procedure

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