

BestMSK Spinal MRI: Patient Advice



Some important things you need to know about what an MRI scan can tell us and when it is appropriate

- MRIs provide a picture of the anatomy of the spine.
- MRIs cannot tell how someone feels and are not a diagnosis.
- MRIs can be used to plan treatment with you and rule out serious conditions such as cancer or fractures.
- MRIs are rarely needed for people with back or neck pain.
- MRIs should be requested after assessment by a specialist.

Some important things you need to know about your MRI scan report

- Some of the medical words used in MRI reports can be complex and may sound scary.
- For example, eight out of ten people aged 50 or over with NO pain have something called 'degeneration of discs' noted in their MRI report¹. However, findings such as this are more common as we become older and can be signs of a naturally maturing spine.



If you have any questions about having an MRI scan or need clarification on the report of an MRI scan, please discuss these with the clinician who sent you for the MRI.

References:

1. W. Brinjikji, P.H. Luetmer, B. Comstock, B.W. Bresnahan, L.E. Chen, R.A. Deyo, S. Halabi, J.A. Turner, A.L. Avins, K. James, J.T. Wald, D.F. Kallmes and J.G. Jarvik. Systematic Literature Review of Imaging Features of Spinal Degeneration in Asymptomatic Populations. AJNR Apr 2015, 36 (4) 811-816.