Lower Extremity
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. 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 neurostimulators CANNOT have an MRI.
Patients with pins, plates, screws and joint replacements can have an MRI, as long as it has been six weeks since placement of the device.
Patients with stents and filters can have an MRI as long as it has been at least six to eight 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. benefit, and should avoid an MRI in the 1st trimester of pregnancy.

How Does The Patient Prepare?
Patient should be NPO 6 - 8 hours prior to the exam.
For all contrast MRI’s:
A current creatinine test (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. 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.
Please fax these results with the order.
Patients will need to remove all jewelry, hairclips, ponytails, bobby pins and all clothing containing metal. This includes bras with metal enclosures, and jeans with metal zippers and buttons.
The 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 an order, and reschedule the patient’s MRI.
A driver will be needed for patients receiving any type of sedation. Patients receiving conscious sedation should plan a three- to four-hour appointment time to include recovery.
What Happens During the Test?
The patient will be asked to lie face-up 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. The 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. The patient should relax and remain still during the exam. The patient should plan 60 to 90 minutes of total clinic time. The scan time can vary from 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the study. The patient may resume normal activities following the MRI.

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

(Information adapted from www.radiologyinfo.org and Dr. Charles De Pena)

This information is intended for use as merely a guideline for referring physicians and their staff members only. It contains information pertaining to the most commonly ordered exams and indications. However, Shawnee Mission Medical Center 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.