

White House says Trump got MRI for ‘preventive’ cardiovascular check-up

The 79-year-old president also underwent imaging for abdominal health, and he “remains in excellent overall health,” Trump’s physician said.

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Summary



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President Donald Trump leaves the White House for Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Oct. 10. (Sarah L. Voisin/The Washington Post)



By [Dan Diamond](#)

The White House on Monday said an advanced imaging scan President Donald Trump underwent in recent weeks that had fueled questions about his health found nothing abnormal, characterizing the check of the 79-year-old’s cardiovascular system and abdominal area as a routine procedure.

Sean Barbabella, a Navy captain and the president’s physician, wrote in a memo released by the White House that Trump’s results were

“perfectly normal,” saying that the MRI administered to the president was “standard for an executive physical at President Trump’s age.”

The president “remains in excellent overall health,” Barbabella wrote.



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The announcement came weeks after Trump on Oct. 10 visited Walter Reed National Military Medical Center for what the White House characterized as a “scheduled follow-up evaluation,” prompting questions from journalists and some outside physicians who asked why the president was making his second known visit to Walter Reed in six months.

Trump, the oldest person to be sworn in as president, has faced scrutiny after observers and the media noticed his visibly swollen legs and a recurring bruise on his hand earlier this year. The White House in July said that Trump had chronic venous insufficiency, a mild but chronic illness related to his age — a rare admission of any presidential health issues.

Administration officials in October said that Trump was receiving advanced imaging but did not elaborate, and the president himself has offered vague explanations for the exam, including when asked what body part was scanned.

“I have no idea. It was just an MRI,” the president told reporters on Sunday on Air Force One, saying that he would soon release details about the scan. “It wasn’t the brain, because I took a cognitive test and I aced it.”

Outside physicians had a mixed response to the White House’s disclosure, with some praising the administration for releasing details and others saying off-cycle testing warranted additional information. Trump last year touted his fitness for the job in part to draw a contrast with President Joe Biden, who at 81 faced mounting questions about whether he was capable of serving four more years in office.

Jeffrey Kuhlman, who served as President Barack Obama’s physician, said it was common to perform an abdominal MRI as part of an “executive physical” screening for preventive purposes, but that a different series of tests would be more standard to assess heart health.

Jonathan Reiner, a longtime cardiologist for former vice president Dick Cheney, wrote in a text message that an MRI or CT scan “is absolutely not a part of standard preventative imaging” for men of Trump’s age and noted that Trump did not appear to undergo similar scans when he received a presidential physical exam in April, according to White House statements at the time.

“These recent tests were performed off cycle,” Reiner wrote in a text message.

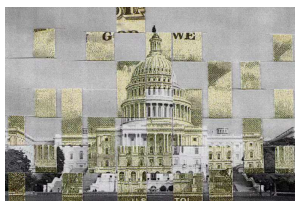
There is no requirement for presidents to undergo medical exams or disclose information about their health. But past presidents, including Trump, have generally made medical visits to Walter Reed only once a year, unless there is an urgent medical issue, such as when Trump contracted a serious case of covid-19 in late 2020.

Some business executives and other leaders undergo what is known as an executive physical, which can include an MRI or other advanced imaging in an effort to identify health concerns. Such scans have a mixed track record, with experts saying that the imaging is often unnecessary.

“So-called executive physicals can often include advanced imaging tests that are not medically recommended for screening purposes, since there is no evidence that the tests improve health or longevity, and yet they frequently pick up incidental findings that are better left alone,” Ishani Ganguli, a primary care physician and associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, wrote in an email.

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