

Child health information factsheet

CT scan

Your child needs a CT scan (computerised tomography) of their head or body.

The scanner uses low radiation x-rays combined with a computer to produce clear detailed pictures of inside the body. The information is transformed into images on a TV monitor and the internal structures are photographed.

The scanner is arch shaped and looks a bit like a large ring doughnut. While the scanning is taking place, it makes a whirring noise like a washing machine.

The CT scan is not painful but the machine can seem scary to some children.



Your child may go directly to the CT scan department or to the John Atwell children's day ward first. This will be clearly written in your child's appointment letter along with instructions for when your child can eat and drink before coming for their scan.

John Atwell day ward

It may be necessary to give your child some medicine to make him or her sleepy. This may be given as syrup, a tablet or a short anaesthetic.

You and your child will be asked some questions about your child's health by the anaesthetist and a nurse who will explain the procedure for the day. Your child's pulse, temperature, breathing rate and weight will be recorded.

Contrast agent

If your child does not need an anaesthetic they may still require contrast agent to obtain clearer pictures. This will be given through a cannula (a plastic tube into the vein) which is usually done on the John Atwell day ward.

Contrast may also be given in an orange or blackcurrant flavour drink just before going to the scan room. For this procedure your child should not eat or drink anything for two hours before coming to the hospital

Please follow the instructions given in the appointment letter carefully.

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Your nurse will go with you and your child to the scan room.

You will be able to stay with your child throughout the scan unless they need an anaesthetic. You will need to wear a lead rubber apron and neck collar in the scan room.

The CT scan department

There is a picture book available in the CT department's waiting room which shows what the scanner is like. Please ask to see this when you arrive for your appointment.

All clothing and accessories with metal fasteners (including baby sleep suits) will need to be removed before entering the scanning room.

Your child will lie on a bed, which moves slowly into the scanner.

The time in the scanner is very short, sometimes only a few seconds, it is important that your child lies very still while the pictures are being taken.

Older children may be asked to hold their breath for a few seconds as this helps to produce a clearer picture.

If brothers and sisters come they will have to be supervised at all times and they will not be allowed in the room while the scan is being done.

After the scan

If your child has had an anaesthetic or sedation they will stay in the scan department until they are awake. The nurse will take you and your child back to the ward. On the ward your child will be given a drink and a biscuit before they can go home.

If your child did not have an anaesthetic the cannula will be removed in the department and they can go straight home.

A radiologist (a doctor who specialises in reading x-rays and scans) will look at the scan and report the results to your doctor. You will be told the results at your next outpatient appointment unless your doctor makes any other arrangement.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact

John Atwell day ward: **023 8079 6157**

Open Monday to Friday 7.30am to 8pm

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8079 4688 for help.