

## Child health information factsheet

# Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan

You have been told that your child needs an MRI scan of their head or body.

The scanner is a tunnel like tube and the front looks like a large ring doughnut. The scanner combines a powerful magnet and radio waves with a computer to produce very clear pictures. It does not use radiation.

The information is put into images on a TV monitor and photographed.

The MRI scan is not painful but the scanner can seem scary to some children.

Your child will lie on a table that moves slowly into position in the scanner; the scan takes at least 30 to 40 minutes.

It is very important for your child to lie completely still while the scanner is working, if not the pictures will be blurred.

It is a good idea for your child to wear clothes without zips, metal buttons or poppers to the scan. If they do the items of clothing will need to be removed before the scan and a hospital gown will be worn.

You will also need to fill out a questionnaire and it is very important that you tell the radiographer before the scan if your child has any metal in their body.

### The scan

Some children will not be able to stay still during the scan because of their age or circumstances.

A general anaesthetic (medicine given to make your child go to sleep) may be needed. This is given through a cannula (a small plastic tube into a vein).

If this is the case for your child, he or she will not be able to eat food or drink milk for six hours, clear fluids may be continued up to two hours before coming into hospital on the day of the scan.

Sometimes contrast agent is used, this maybe needed to help give a clearer picture. This is a fluid put in through a cannula. If contrast agent is needed but not an anaesthetic, you may be asked to go to the John Atwell day ward for this to be done.

If your child does not need an anaesthetic or contrast agent you will go straight to the MRI department.

You will be told in the appointment letter where you need to go.

### John Atwell day ward

On the John Atwell day ward you will be seen by a nurse and an anaesthetist who will ask some questions about your child's health.



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Your child's pulse, temperature, breathing rate and weight will be checked and recorded in their medical notes.

Anaesthetic cream will be put on the back of both of your child's hands. This will numb the surface of the skin for the cannula to be put in, ready for their anaesthetic or contrast agent.

## Staying with your child

If your child is having an anaesthetic you will need to stay in the waiting room during the scan and the anaesthetist will be with your child. If they are not you can stay with them while they have the scan.

If you are going to stay with your child during the scan you will be asked to remove any magnetic metals like keys, watches, belts or earrings, before coming into the scanning room.

It is very important that you tell staff if you have any metal in your body, like metal pins or a pacemaker, or if you may be pregnant.

## After the scan

When the scan is finished, if your child has had an anaesthetic one of the staff will come to collect you from where you are waiting and take you to your child. You can stay with him or her until they wake up. When they are awake you will go back to the ward with the nurse.

When you are back on the ward, your child will be offered a drink and something to eat. If he or she recovers well and is able to drink normally then they will be allowed to go home.

If your child has not had an anaesthetic you will go home after the scan.

The results of scans are not available on the same day. They can take two to three weeks and the results will be given to you at your outpatient appointment.

## Risks

- As far as it is known an MRI scan is an extremely safe procedure
- All metal must be removed as there are risks involved if this is not done
- As with all anaesthetics there are risks, these will be explained to you before the scan
- Generally there are no side effects from having an injection of contrast agent.

## If you have any questions or concerns please contact

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

Hospital switchboard **023 8077 7222** and ask for MRI department or ask the nurse looking after your child on the ward.

**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.**