

Fact Sheet

MRI scan



What is an MRI scan?

MRI stands for Magnetic Resonance Imaging. This technique uses a very powerful magnet and radio waves to produce images of any part of the body. It is safe as no X-rays are used to make these images. Images are taken in layers and are of a high quality. The scan usually takes between 20 and 60 minutes depending on which area is being examined.

What do I bring?

If you have a copy of the original referral letter, please bring it with you.

If you have any other X-rays, CT scans, Nuclear Medicine scans or Ultrasound scans, please bring them with you so that we can compare these images with the MRI scans.

If your child would like to bring along their favourite CD, we can play it through headphones for them during the scan.

What happens before the MRI scan?

Please come for your appointment 15 minutes early. There are some administrative tasks that need to be done before the examination can commence. You will be asked to complete and sign a questionnaire on your child's behalf. It is important that you fill out the form accurately and to ask any questions before going into the magnet room. Unless your child is having an anaesthetic for the scan, you may accompany your child during the examination. If you do so, you will also need to complete the questionnaire. There are places on the form for the child and two accompanying people.

Depending on the clothes your child is wearing, they may need to change into a hospital gown. If your child is having an anaesthetic for the scan, you will be sent a letter giving specific instructions on when to fast your child and when to come to The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

The MRI unit is at the Children's Hospital at Westmead and so occasionally there will be a delay in your appointment due to emergency procedures. If there are major delays, we will endeavour to contact you before you arrive to let you know of the delay so that you will not be inconvenienced too much.

What happens during the MRI scan?

Your child will be placed on a table. Depending which part of the body is being examined, a plastic frame may be either placed around or strapped onto your child. This improves the quality of the pictures. The table will then slide inside the magnet. There are lights inside the magnet so it won't be dark.

A loud tapping sound will be heard while the machine generates the pictures. It is important not to move at this time, otherwise the pictures will be of a poor quality and the scan may need to be repeated.

For the examination, several sets of pictures will be made. Each set will appear different, but all combine to give an overall picture of the area being examined. Sometimes it is necessary to give a small injection. The liquid injected into the vein enhances the images and helps to highlight any abnormal areas. It is very safe and passed out of the body in the urine.

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What happens after the scan?

Your child is free to resume all normal activities. There are no side effects. A Radiologist will send a report to the referring doctor, which usually takes four to five working days. If you are seeing your doctor straight after the scan, he/she can phone the Radiology Department and talk to the Radiologist. In this department, no hard copies are made of the examination. The images are stored on computer and can be viewed on monitors in the Children's Hospital at Westmead. If you require films of the scan, then a fee will be charged.

Remember

- The machine is noisy but does not hurt.
- You must stay still for clear pictures.
- You can bring a CD to listen to during the scan.

This fact sheet is for education purposes only.
Please consult with your doctor or other health professional
to make sure this information is right for your child.

This document was reviewed on Tuesday, 5 April 2005.

the
children's
hospital at Westmead

www.chw.edu.au

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