

Your child's magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan under general anaesthetic

Information for families and carers

We have given you this factsheet because your child has been referred for a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan under general anaesthetic. It provides information about what having an MRI scan under general anaesthetic involves so you know what to expect at your child's appointment. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is an MRI scan?

An MRI is a type of scan that produces very clear images of the inside of the body using a powerful magnet and radio waves. It is a safe and painless procedure.

The results of an MRI scan can be used to help diagnose conditions, plan treatments, and assess how effective previous treatment has been.

What is a general anaesthetic?

A general anaesthetic is a medicine that sends you to sleep.

A general anaesthetic will either be given as a:

- liquid that's injected into your child's veins through a cannula (a thin, plastic tube that feeds into a vein, usually on the back of the hand)
- gas that your child breathes in through a mask

Why does my child need a general anaesthetic?

Children need to stay still during an MRI scan to allow us to take clear images. Some children may find this difficult to do, either because of their age or an existing medical condition. For this reason, we often recommend children have a general anaesthetic for this scan.

Older children may be able to have the scan without a general anaesthetic if they feel they will be able to lie still for the duration of the scan. If you think this is a possibility for your child, please discuss this with the anaesthetist (a specialist doctor trained in giving general anaesthetic) on the day of your child's scan.

How should I prepare for my child's scan?

We will send you an appointment letter which will give you important details about your child's MRI scan, such as the date, location and other useful information. If you cannot attend on the date arranged, please contact us as soon as you receive the appointment letter so that another appointment can be made for your child.

Eating and drinking

Your child's appointment letter will contain specific instructions about eating and drinking before the procedure. Please follow these instructions carefully.

Medications

Your child should continue to take their regular medication at the usual time, unless they normally take their medication with food or milk, or a healthcare professional has instructed you differently.

If any of your child's medications have been missed, please bring these with you on the day of their scan in their original packaging. It would also be helpful if you could bring a list of your child's current medications, including the doses and times usually taken.

Jewellery

Your child cannot wear any metal in the MRI scanner. Please remove all jewellery and any piercings before coming into hospital.

What will happen before the scan?

When you arrive for your child's scan, a nurse and an anaesthetist will meet you and ask some questions about your child's health. They will also explain the general anaesthetic in more detail. This is a good opportunity to ask any questions that you or your child may have. For more information about your child having a general anaesthetic, please see the 'Useful links' section at the end of this factsheet.

A member of our MRI team will also complete a safety questionnaire with you. It is very important that you tell them if your child has any metal in their body (for example, if they have a pacemaker, metal implants or clips, dental braces, or ever had metal fragments in their eyes), or if they have had any recent operations or procedures.

We may change your child into a hospital gown before we take them with you to the MRI scanner.

What will happen during the scan?

The anaesthetist will give your child the anaesthetic before they go into the MRI scanner. In most cases, you will be able to stay with your child until they fall asleep. However, while they are having the scan, you will need to stay outside in the waiting room. The anaesthetist will be with your child and will monitor them at all times throughout the scan.

When your child is inside the MRI scanner, a radiographer (a specially trained healthcare professional) will take the necessary images.

Contrast agent

To allow us to get a clearer picture from the MRI scan, we may use a contrast agent (a special dye which makes tissues and blood vessels show up more clearly in the MRI images).

If we do need to use contrast agent, we will give this to your child via their cannula while the scan is being performed.

How long will it take?

The scan will take between 30 to 90 minutes.

What will happen after the scan?

After the scan is complete, we will move your child to the recovery area. Once they have recovered from the anaesthetic, we will come to collect you from where you are waiting and take you to see your child.

When your child is fully awake, a nurse will take you back to the ward. We will then offer your child a drink and something to eat. Once your child is able to drink normally, they will be allowed to go home.

When will my child receive their results?

Your child's results will not be available on the day of their scan. This is because a radiologist (a specially trained doctor who interprets diagnostic imaging) will need to look at the images first. This can take up to two to three weeks. When the results are back, your child's doctor will arrange an outpatient appointment to discuss these with you.

What are the risks?

An MRI scan is an extremely safe procedure. It does **not** use radiation.

For this specific MRI scan, your child needs to have a general anaesthetic, and as with all anaesthetics, there are some risks involved. However, serious complications are extremely rare. The anaesthetist will explain these risks to you before your child has their scan.

Are there any alternatives?

If an MRI scan is not suitable for your child, we will discuss the alternative options with you in more detail.

Parking

If you are arriving by car, please remember that our car parks can get very busy, so it's a good idea to allow plenty of time to find a space. You may wish to consider getting a lift or coming by public transport.

Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us.

John Atwell day ward

Telephone: **023 8120 6157** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

MRI department

Telephone: **023 8120 6588** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/mri-scan

www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Docs/Services/Child-health/Royal-College-of-Anaesthetists-Information-for-children-parents-and-carers.pdf

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

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