Evelina London

NHS
Guy's and St Thomas'
NHS Foundation Trust

Your child's MRI scan under general anaesthetic

This information explains having an MRI scan under general anaesthetic. It covers the benefits, risks and any other options you have as well as what to expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions, please speak to a member of the team caring for your child.

If you'd like to know more about your child's general anaesthetic, ask for a copy of our information, **Your child's general anaesthetic**.

MRI scan

MRI stands for magnetic resonance imaging. An MRI scan uses a strong magnet and radio waves to produce detailed pictures of the inside of your body.

Benefits of your child having an MRI scan

An MRI scan can help to find out what is causing your child's problem, and help your doctor find the best treatment. It's especially useful for looking at problems in the spine, brain and joints.

An MRI scan provides more detailed pictures of your child's body than an X-ray. The results can be used with other test results to provide a full picture of what's going on. Unlike X-rays and CT (computerised tomography) scans, MRI scans do not use radiation.

Risks of having an MRI scan

An MRI is very safe for most patients, and the scan is painless. Patients with heart pacemakers and some surgical implants, for example a cochlear implant, cannot have an MRI scan.

You'll be asked to sign a safety questionnaire for your child before their scan, to make sure it's safe. Your child may also need to have an injection of dye (contrast agent) for their scan. The dye helps areas show up better on the scan, and gives more detailed pictures. In rare cases the dye can cause an allergic reaction, read **Injection of dye (contrast agent)** on page 2.

Other options

If your child cannot have an MRI, the radiologist (a specialist doctor trained in studying scans and X-rays) may suggest a different scan. This could be a CT or ultrasound scan.

Preparing your child for an MRI scan

Please read the information leaflet **Your child's general anaesthetic**.

Before the scan

Before your child has the scan, the radiographer (a specially trained person who does the MRI scan) will go through your child's safety questionnaire with you. Ask the radiographer if you have any questions.

Your child will be given general anaesthetic before the scan. General anaesthetic is medicine that helps your child fall asleep. Your child will be given the anaesthetic in the anaesthetic room. Once they're asleep they will be taken to the MRI scanner.

During the scan

The scanner is a short tunnel. When it's working, it makes a loud banging noise. We'll give your child headphones to wear, to protect their ears while they're asleep.

Injection of dye (contrast agent)

If we're scanning certain areas of your child's body, we may need to give them an injection of dye. This shows up on the scan and gives us more detailed pictures, particularly of your child's blood vessels. The injection will be given through a plastic tube (cannula). A doctor will put the plastic tube in a vein in your child's arm.

The dye contains gadolinium, which can occasionally cause allergic reactions. The most common allergic reactions are:

- headache
- feeling sick (nausea)
- being sick (vomiting)
- sneezing
- wheezing
- runny nose
- eye irritation
- itching
- skin rash
- swelling of the face, mouth, hands, feet or throat
- difficulty in breathing
- low blood pressure

Before the scan we will check whether your child has had any previous allergies. If you would like more information about the injection, please ask the radiographer before your scan.

If your child has any problems with their liver or kidneys please tell the medical team when you come for your appointment. They may need to do extra tests before giving your child the dye injection.

How long the scan will take

This depends on which part of your child's body is being scanned and the information the doctor needs. The radiographer will tell you how long they expect your child's scan to take. The whole procedure usually takes one to two hours.

After the scan

After the scan your child will be taken to the recovery room. Here, specially trained recovery nurses will look after your child. You'll be taken to the recovery room as soon as your child starts to wake up.

If your child had the injection of dye, very rarely an allergic reaction can happen up to two days after the scan. Read **Injection of dye (contrast agent)** on page 2 for symptoms to look out for. If your child shows signs of an allergic reaction contact the ward where your child was admitted immediately, or contact your local emergency department (A&E).

Getting the test results

The pictures taken during the scan are carefully studied by the radiologist. They create a detailed report that is sent to the doctor who referred your child for the scan. This is usually a hospital specialist.

You will get the results of the scan at your child's next clinic appointment. For more urgent problems, they may be available sooner.

Useful information

Find more information about having an MRI scan at Evelina London Children's Hospital on our **website** evelinalondon.nhs.uk/MRI/anaesthetic

You can also find more information about your child having an anaesthetic on our **website** evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/anaesthetics/patients.aspx

Contact us

If you have any questions about the MRI scan under general anaesthetic please contact the doctor who referred your child for the scan.

If you have any questions about your child's appointment:
phone 020 7188 9098, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Outside these hours, please leave a message on the answer phone.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets**

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801 **email** gstt.pals-gstt@nhs.net

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please contact the service your child is seeing.

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **phone** 111 **web** www.111.nhs.uk

Leaflet number: 2728/VER6
Date published: May 2023
Review date: May 2026
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A list of sources is available on request