

Your child's MRI scan

This leaflet gives information about your child's MRI scan. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives, as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for your child.

What is a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan?

An MRI scan uses a strong magnet and radio waves to produce detailed pictures of the inside of the body.

Benefits of an MRI scan

An MRI scan can help to find out what is causing your child's problem and help your doctor to find the best treatment.

It provides much more detailed pictures of your child's body than an ordinary X-ray. It is particularly good at identifying problems in the spine, brain and in joints. It is also helpful for looking at other parts of the body, often when other types of scan have not given a full picture.

Unlike X-rays and CT (computerised tomography) scans, MRI scans do not use radiation.

Risks of an MRI scan

Having an MRI is a very safe procedure for most patients, but people with some surgical implants, such as pacemakers, and cochlear implants, can't be scanned. You will be asked to complete and sign a safety questionnaire for your child to make sure it is safe for them to be scanned. You will also be asked to complete and sign a safety questionnaire for yourself to make sure it is safe for you to go into the MRI room with your child.

Your child might need to have an injection of contrast agent (dye) for their scan which can very rarely cause an allergic reaction. Please see the 'Will my child need an injection?' section later in this leaflet for more information.

Other treatment options

If your child can't have an MRI scan, the radiologist (doctor trained in studying scans and X-rays) might suggest a different type of imaging. This could be a CT scan or an ultrasound scan.

Preparing your child for the scan

Your child can eat and drink as normal. If your child is taking any medicines, please continue with them. If we need your child to do anything in preparation, we will send you information about this with your appointment letter.

Talk to your child

Preparing your child for the visit to hospital and the MRI scan will help them understand what is happening. From a young age, children are keen to talk about what they know about hospitals. Talking to your child before their appointment will give them time to ask any questions or raise any concerns.

Will your child need an injection?

If we are scanning certain areas of your child's body, we might need to give them an injection of contrast 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 by inserting a small needle into a vein in your child's arm.

The contrast dye contains gadolinium, which occasionally causes an allergic reaction. The most common allergic reactions are:

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

Before the scan we will check if your child has had any previous allergies. If you would like more information about the injection, please ask the radiographer (the person who does the MRI scan) before your child's scan.

If your child has any problems with their liver or kidneys, please tell the radiographer, as extra tests might be needed before we can give any contrast.

What your child should wear

Your child will need to change into a hospital gown. This is because some fabrics contain metallic elements which might heat up during the scan, and metal fastenings might spoil the pictures. All jewellery and hair slides and clips must also be removed before the scan.

If you are going into the MRI room with your child, you will need to take off your watch and take any credit cards or travel cards with magnetic strips out of your pockets. The scanner can affect these and stop them from working. Lockers are provided for your clothes and valuables.

Before the scan

You will be given the opportunity to ask the radiographer any questions you have. Your child will also have the opportunity to spend a short time with a radiographer or a hospital play specialist (someone trained to use play to prepare children for procedures) to discuss the scan. This will give your child a better understanding of what to expect during the MRI scan.

During the scan

In the scanner your child will be asked to lie on the scanner bed where they will be made as comfortable as possible because they will need to keep very still during the scan. It is important that they do not move, or the pictures could be blurred and the scan will have to be repeated.

When your child is positioned correctly, we will move them into the scanner. The part of your child's body that we are scanning, must be in the centre of the machine. The scanner is a short tunnel. The radiographer will talk to your child during the scan to let them know what is happening, and your child will be given a buzzer to press if they need to attract our attention during the scan.

When the scanner is working, it makes a loud banging noise. We will give you and your child headphones to wear, to reduce the noise. Your child can listen to music while they are being scanned, and for some scans they can watch a DVD, so please bring in your music or a DVD of your choice. You can also bring a favourite teddy bear (which has no metal on it) to go into the scanner with your child.

How long scans take

This depends on which part of your child's body is being scanned and the information that the doctor needs. The radiographer will tell you how long they expect your child's scan to take. Most scans take 20 to 30 minutes.

Will your child feel anything?

The scan should be completely painless. The most difficult part is keeping still. Please make sure your child is as comfortable and as relaxed as possible before we start.

Can you stay with your child during the scan?

Yes. Although this is a children's hospital, you are still responsible for the behaviour of your child. If you are responsible for other children, please arrange supervision for them so you can be with your child during the scan.

After the scan

As soon as the scan is finished you can go home, or back to the ward if your child is staying in the hospital. Your child can eat and drink as normal and resume their usual activities.

The pictures taken during the scan are carefully studied by the radiologist who will produce a detailed report.

Getting the results

The results will be sent to the doctor who referred your child for the scan. This is usually a specialist in the hospital. If you make a clinic appointment for 2 weeks after the scan, the results should be available. For more urgent problems, they might be available sooner.

More information

Evelina Children’s Hospital MRI webpage – Information about having an awake MRI scan at the Evelina MRI unit, [web](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/mri/overview.aspx) www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/mri/overview.aspx

‘My MRI’ virtual reality app –

Provides a virtual reality 3D experience of having an MRI scan at our MRI Unit. It is available to download from Google Play and Apple App Store.



My MRI at GSTT 4+
NHS GSTT
[Jonathan Ashmore](#)
Designed for iPad
★★★★★ 5.0 • 2 Ratings
Free

Contact us

If you have any questions about your child’s MRI scan, please contact the MRI department, [phone](tel:02071889218) 020 7188 9218, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Outside of these hours, [phone](tel:02071884611) 020 7188 4611 and leave a message on our answerphone.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [web](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets) www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child’s medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, [phone](tel:02071883003) 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm [email](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk) letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), [phone](tel:02071888801) 020 7188 8801 [email](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk) pals@gstt.nhs.uk. To make a complaint contact the resolution department [phone](tel:02071883514) 020 7188 3514 [email](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk) complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch, [phone](tel:02071888815) 020 7188 8815 [email](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk) languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

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](tel:111) 111 [web](http://www.111.nhs.uk) www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, [web](http://www.nhs.uk) www.nhs.uk

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