

Information for Parents and Carers

Having an MRI Scan under a General Anaesthetic

The aim of this leaflet is to provide you with further information regarding your child's MRI scan which is being performed under a general anaesthetic.

What is an MRI scan?

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) creates high resolution images of the body on a computer using a powerful magnet and radio frequency waves. MRI is a very safe way of producing images that can diagnose medical conditions and produces more detailed pictures than an ordinary x-ray. It does not use x-rays and has not been shown to have any harmful side effects. The scan is carried out by Radiographers specially trained in MRI.

The MRI scanner is an open-ended tube. Your child will lie on a bed which then slides into the tube, with the part of the body which we are scanning at the centre of the tube. The scan should be completely painless.

Why does my child need to have a General Anaesthetic?

MRI scans can take anything from 15 minutes up to an hour or slightly longer in some cases. This is due to the level of detail that the MRI provides and requires the patient to lie very still for the duration of the scan. Some children can find this very difficult either because of their age or medical condition. In these cases it may be necessary to have a general anaesthetic in order to obtain the best quality scan.

The decision to perform the scan in this way will be discussed with you by the referring Doctor and is made on an individual basis.

What happens on the day of the scan?

You will need to bring your child to the Children's Day Ward on the date and time stated on your appointment letter. This letter will also contain important information about when your child needs to stop eating and drinking.

A member of the Nursing Team will greet you and ask some questions about your child's medical history. They will also check your child's temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure.

A Doctor who will be administering the anaesthetic will visit you on the Day Ward to discuss this further.

During the anaesthetic process, a cannula will be inserted into a vein. A topical cream may be applied to your child's hands/arms on the ward. This works to numb the skin so your child should not feel the cannula being inserted. The Nurse looking after your child will discuss this with you.

A small toy or comforter can accompany your child to the department. It can remain with your child during the scan if you wish, providing it has no metal or mechanical parts. They can also wear their own pyjamas (no metal zips/buttons).

Around 20 – 30 minutes before their scan time, you and your child will be collected by Porters and brought to the MRI department. A member of the MRI team will need to check your child's safety questionnaire with you and will also be able to answer any questions you may have.

Your child will be given the anaesthetic in our anaesthetic bay which is next to the MRI scanner. Once they are asleep, we will take them into the scanner. We have a waiting room which you are very welcome to use whilst your child is being scanned.

What happens during the scan?

Once inside the scanner, your child will be monitored at all times by the Radiographer and the Anaesthetic Team.

The scanner is very noisy, so your child will be given ear protection for the duration of the scan.

What happens after the scan?

Once the scan is completed, your child will be brought back into the anaesthetic bay. The specialist team will continue to monitor and begin to wake your child up. A member of the MRI team will bring you to the bay.

When ready, you and your child will return to the Children's Day Ward to continue recovery. Once fully recovered and they have eaten and had a drink, they should be able to return home the same day.

The MRI images are studied by a specially trained Radiologist and a report will be sent along to the Doctor who referred your child for their scan. The referring Doctor will contact you with the results or discuss them with you at the next follow-up appointment.

Further information

Please complete the enclosed safety questionnaire for your child prior to your appointment. If you have any queries, please contact the MRI appointments office.

If the appointment is inconvenient, please contact the MRI appointments office as soon as possible.

If you have any further questions or concerns, the MRI team are happy to help.