

# Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

Preparing your child for an MRI scan



The MRI is a large machine with a long tube centered inside the magnet.

Please read the information on the following pages. Then talk with your child about what they will see, hear and feel during the MRI procedure. Let them know that they will be safe during the scan.

- **If your child is scheduled with anesthesia**, arrive at least 1 hour before your scheduled appointment; you will need to allow 2 to 4 hours for the appointment. This includes the pre-anesthesia nurse visit and recovery time after the test.

If having anesthesia, your child can eat or drink:

- Solids, milk and formula up to 6 hours before your scheduled appointment
- Breast milk up to 4 hours before the appointment
- Clear liquids like apple juice (without pulp), 7-Up or water up to 2 hours before the appointment
- **Nothing** more by mouth 2 hours before the appointment. This includes items like gum and mints.
- **If anesthesia is not needed**, arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment.

- If you plan to stay in the MRI room with your child, you must remove all metal objects from your person, including keys, coins, credit cards and wallets (braces and fillings are okay). We provide a place to lock up your valuables.
- An MRI scan may not be done to children who are pregnant, have metal shavings in their eyes or have implants such as aneurysm clips, pacemakers, inner ear implants (ear tubes are okay) or certain prostheses. Be sure to tell your child's doctor if any of these conditions apply to you or your child.

### **What is an MRI scan?**

MRI uses a magnetic field, radio waves and computers to help the doctor see healthy and diseased tissue without X-rays or surgery. The MRI scan produces detailed pictures that provide a multidimensional look at a body part. The MRI does not use radiation and has no known harmful effects.

### **Where is the MRI scan done?**

MRI scans are done on the 4th floor of the Melinda French Gates Ambulatory Care Building — this is the Whale zone. When you arrive, please stop by registration. You will be directed to the radiology reception area and then taken to the MRI suite.

### **What happens during an MRI scan?**

First, your child will change into a hospital gown or scrubs. Then you and your child will go through several metal screening checks before entering the MRI room. This is needed, because metal objects can be harmful, damage the machine and interfere with the MRI scan.

Once in the room, your child will lie on a narrow table. The table slides into the center of the magnet, which looks like a tube. The tube is open at both ends.

Sometimes, we need to give your child an injection so that the scan shows the areas of concern more clearly. MRI results will be available to your child's referring doctor the day after the exam.

### **What else can my child expect?**

- During the scan, the magnet makes some thumping and humming noises. Although these sounds may be scary at first, they are harmless.
- There is no pain during the MRI scan.
- Your child lies within the body-length tube inside the MRI. This is uncomfortable for some children. If you know your child has a fear of being inside a closed-in area (claustrophobia), please tell your doctor and the MRI staff.
- Your child must lie very still while inside the magnet. Children who are unable to lie still will need anesthesia (a medicine that will make your child sleep).

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### To Learn More

- Radiology  
206-987-2133
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers  
206-987-2280 (TTY)

- The actual scan may take 30 to 60 minutes to complete. During this time, your child may listen to a compact disc (CD) from home or choose from our selection. If your child has an MP3 player, they can listen to that during the scan.
- Your child may bring a favorite stuffed animal to the MRI scan. Remember to make sure that the toy does not have any metal parts.
- One parent is welcome to stay in the room with their child during the MRI scan once they are screened for metal.
- The MRI staff can see and hear your child at all times during the exam.



### What if my child needs anesthesia?

If your child is unable to hold still for the MRI (30 to 60 minutes), they will be anesthetized by an anesthesiologist. You can be with your child as they fall asleep, but you are not allowed in the scan room during the examination.

The anesthesiologist will closely monitor your child throughout the examination. A registered nurse will monitor your child after they come out of the scan room. You can be with your child during this recovery phase and be there as they awaken from the anesthesia.

After the MRI scan, you must stay at the hospital until your child wakes up and is alert enough to go home (usually 1 to 3 hours).

### Questions?

Please feel free to ask questions before, during and after the scan. For more information, call 206-987-2133.

### Parking

Please park in the Whale garage on level 5 or 6.

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Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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