

Directorate of Radiology - Children's X-ray Department

MRI Scan (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) or “The Space Capsule Test”

This big magnet machine takes lots of pictures of the inside of your body. It looks a bit like a space capsule or a tunnel. As you lie inside it to have the pictures taken, you can pretend to be an astronaut on an exciting space adventure.

Zena is ready to go inside the big MRI machine. This is like her space capsule. The Radiographer wants to take lots of pictures of Zena's spine and brain from all sorts of different angles.



Zena puts on a helmet and lies as straight as she can on a narrow table. When she is ready, the radiographer drives her into the space capsule for the start position. Zena closes her eyes very tight.

It is quite noisy inside the machine. Zena can hear a clanking noise which sounds just like a real space capsule. She can hear music playing through headphones and the Radiographer talking to her. But she doesn't feel frightened at all. Mum is in the room too, touching Zena's feet.

It takes about 30 minutes for all the pictures to be taken by the computer. Zena has to lie very still, until the Radiologist has the pictures he needs.

Parent Points

- In an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan, complicated pictures are made by using a combination of magnetic fields, radiowaves and a powerful computer, not x-rays. This test shows up much more detail than plain x-rays. In order to pick up the radiowaves, an aerial-like device is positioned around or adjacent to the area of the body under investigation. The whole scan can take up to 30 minutes to complete, during which time the child must keep very still. Children up to the age of five to six years usually have a general anaesthetic or sedation. If your child does require a general anaesthetic then your child should not have anything substantial to eat or drink for over six hours before and only clear fluids up to 2 hours before. Children having sedation should not be fasted prior to attending hospital

- For older children, one or both parents can be present in the scan room at all times, assuming that you satisfy our safety questionnaire. Your child may be a little frightened when inside the tunnel, but you can reassure your child that you are close, by holding onto a hand or foot. You must not take anything metal, your watch or credit cards into the room.
- For children not needing a general anaesthetic, we do not need them to be starved, however, if they are an in-patient then the ward may want them to be starved for other reasons.
- In some cases, the Radiologist may want to inject a special contrast agent or 'dye' to show up blood vessels. This 'dye' is extremely safe and should not affect your child. If your child has their own favourite music or story on a CD, then please bring it along and we can play it through the headphones, which we use to reduce the noise.

What are the benefits of having an MRI scan?

This test will give the doctor much more detail of the area(s) being scanned than a plain x-ray and also, there is no radiation involved.

Are there any risks of having an MRI scan?

There are no risks involved.

Are there any side effects of having an MRI scan?

There are no side effects.

Results

The results of this examination will be sent to your child's hospital consultant in the next 7 – 10 days, and s/he will contact you, either by appointment or letter.

Contact details: Enquiries - Please ring the appropriate hospital department, as below, that your child is attending

Hours: 8.45am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday
MRI Appointments only:

- RVI (0191) 282 4330
- FRH (0191) 223 7778

Information produced by: Michael Myers, Superintendent Radiographer

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