

Neuroradiology Department

# Children's General Anaesthetic MRI

Information and fasting instructions for  
children having an **afternoon** scan



## What is an MRI?

MRI stands for Magnetic Resonance Imaging.

The Scan Unit uses a large magnet, radio waves and a very sophisticated computer to enable us to take clear pictures of the body. In particular the brain and spinal cord are well shown.

The computer-generated images are transferred digitally onto a work station and then reviewed by a neuroradiologist (a specialist doctor who can interpret MRI images).

The scan causes no discomfort but does make a very loud noise. It is very important that the patient stays absolutely still throughout the scan.

## General anaesthetic

Having a general anaesthetic means that your child will be given medicines by an anaesthetist so that he/she will not be awake at all during the scan.

If your child is unwell in the week before the appointment, for example with a cough, cold or flu, it may be necessary to postpone the scan until he/she is fit for the anaesthetic. Please telephone the nurses on the **Children's Day Care Ward** in that case to discuss this.

## What are the risks and side-effects?

MRI scans do not use X-rays and there are no known risks or side effects associated with MRI scans.

### **Anaesthetic risks**

In modern anaesthesia, serious problems are uncommon. Risk cannot be removed completely, but modern equipment, training and drugs have made general anaesthesia a much safer procedure in recent years.

Most children recover quickly and are soon back to normal after their operation and anaesthetic. Some children may suffer side effects like sickness or a sore throat. These usually last only a short time and there are medicines available to treat them if necessary.

The exact likelihood of complications depends on your child's medical condition and on the anaesthesia they need. The anaesthetist can talk to you about this in detail at your pre-operative visit.

## Fasting instructions

**Please follow these fasting instructions carefully.**

- On the day before the scan your child may eat and drink normally.
- On the morning of the MRI your child may eat breakfast / drink cow's milk but it must be finished by 7.30am.
- Your child may have formula milk before 9.30am.
- Your child may drink breast milk before 10.30am.
- Your child may drink water or squash (not fruit juice) until 11.30am.
- Please do not give your child chewing gum or boiled sweets.
- The scan will be in the afternoon. Your nurse will be able to give you an approximate time when you arrive.

## Coming into hospital

The MRI scan is usually carried out as a day-case and your child will be admitted to the Children's Day Care Ward. You **MUST** be in the ward by 11.30am so that all necessary procedures can be carried out before the scan.

The scan will take place in the afternoon. You should be able to go home a few hours after your child has woken up from the anaesthetic.

## On arrival

You will be seen by a nurse, who will weigh your child, take his/her temperature and answer any questions you may have. You will be seen by the anaesthetist who will be helping your child to sleep for the scan. Special anaesthetic cream may be put on your child's hands at this time. It will also be necessary to complete an MRI Safety Form.

Your child **will not** be allowed into the scanner if he/she has any of the following:

- Heart pacemaker
- Ear / spine stimulators
- Certain surgical clips, e.g. aneurysm clips
- Any metal in eyes or body
- Some types of feeding tubes or lines/catheters – please contact MRI to discuss

**Please contact the MRI Department if you have any questions about this on 01865 234517.**

## The scan

One parent can accompany your child to the anaesthetic room and stay until he/she is asleep. Your child will be away from the ward for an hour or more, depending on the length of time the scan takes.

Your child may either have anaesthetic gas to breathe, or an injection through a cannula (a thin plastic tube that is placed under the skin, usually on the back of the hand). Local anaesthetic cream (EMLA or Ametop, sometimes known as 'magic cream'), can be placed on the hand or arm before injections so they do not hurt so much. It works well for 9 out of 10 children.

If the anaesthetic is given by gas, it will take a little while for your child to be anaesthetised. They may become restless as the gases take effect. If an injection is used, your child will normally become unconscious very quickly indeed. Some parents may find this frightening.

Once your child is asleep you will be asked to leave promptly. Your child will then be taken into the operating theatre to have the operation or investigation. The anaesthetist will be with them all the time. You will be able to go with the nurse to collect your child once the scan is finished.

## After the scan

### **Your child will probably sleep for a while after the scan.**

Your named nurse will make regular checks of your child's pulse and temperature. Once he/she is awake and has had something to eat and drink you will be able to go home. The minimum recovery time before discharge is 2 hours. Your child cannot go home on public transport after a general anaesthetic.

The images will be interpreted and reported by a neuroradiologist who will send the scan and report to the doctor who requested your child's scan.

### **You will not receive any results on the day.**

The MRI report will be available when you next see your usual doctor in the outpatient department.

## How to contact us:

If you have any questions or concerns, please telephone:

**Children's Day Care Ward:            01865 234148**

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

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