

Your child is having a CT scan

The purpose of this information sheet is to explain about your child having a CT scan and to answer some of the questions you may have.

What is a CT scan?

A CT scan (Computed Tomography) uses X-rays and computers to take pictures of the internal structures and organs of your child's body. The scanner is quite a big machine with a circular hole in the centre and is often described as a giant polo or doughnut. Your child will lie on a bed that moves up and into the scanner. During the scan, the machine makes a quiet humming or whirring sound. The scan can take between 5 and 20 minutes depending on the area of the body being scanned and the information needed. Your child will be required to lie still during the scan.

For some scans, your child may need an injection of contrast which is a dye that is used to provide extra information. A cannula (a thin tube inserted into a vein using a fine needle) will be inserted either on the children's ward before coming to the CT department, or by one of the CT radiographers. For young or nervous children, a numbing cream will be applied to the area for injection to make it less painful. When the injection is given, your child may feel as if they are going for a wee, which they will not be. They may also feel a bit warm for a short while as it goes around the body.

If you are needle phobic, it is best if someone else accompanies your child for the injection part of the appointment.

Who will you see when your child has the procedure?

Your child will be cared for by a small team of specially trained radiographers in the CT department and, in some cases, doctors, nurses and play specialists on the children's ward.

Are you required to make any special preparations before the procedure?

Each type of scan has a different preparation which will be explained in the appointment letter or by the staff on the ward. Your child can go to the toilet as normal, and it is best if they wear loose comfortable clothing without zips or buttons so they are less likely to need to change.

What happens during the procedure?

You will receive an appointment letter with instructions on which department to go to first. If your child is having an injection, it will either be radiology or the children's ward.

Once you are in the CT department the radiographers will explain the scan procedure. We will work with you and your child to ensure they are as relaxed as possible using their own comforters and given plenty of time.

Your child will be required to lie on the scan bed. They will be made as comfortable as possible and will feel no ill effects from the scan. They will however be required to stay very still during the scan. You can remain with your child for the duration of their visit to the CT department but only a maximum of two people are permitted to accompany your child.

If your child has any special needs, please ring the department or ward before the scan date so we can discuss what we can do to make the scan as easy as possible.

Can I stay with my child?

Parents/carers are allowed to stay in the scan room while the radiographers set up the scan. If you have a young or anxious child, you can stay with them during the scan **unless you are pregnant**. You will be required to wear a lead apron to act as a barrier from the radiation. Please discuss this with the radiographers **before** the scan starts so there are no delays during the actual scan which could cause vital information being missed.

How do I get the results?

The consultant radiologist will study the images and the report will be available for your referring doctor to view on the hospital information system. They will contact you for an appointment to discuss the results.

We are unable to provide childcare, so please do not bring any other children with you as they will not be allowed into the clinical or scanning rooms.

Are there any risks from the procedure?

Your child will receive a small dose of radiation when having a CT scan. The scanner is programmed to give the lowest dose possible to achieve the best scan images. The benefit of having the scan against the risks will have been discussed and agreed with specialist doctors before your child's appointment is made.

The benefits from making the right diagnosis, and consequently giving your child the right treatment, outweigh the small risk involved. Indeed, the risk to your child's health from not having the examination is likely to be much greater than from the radiation itself.

As with anything someone has not had before, there is a small risk of an allergic reaction to the contrast, but the department has everything that is needed to treat this if required.

If I have a question about my child's scan, who should I contact?

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's scan, please telephone the Scanning Centre reception desk on 01438 284794.

Useful contact details

East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust:

- Website www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk
- Telephone 01438 314333

Scanning Centre reception desk

- Telephone 01438 284794

Leaflet information

You can request this information in a different format or another language; please speak to your doctor or nurse.

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