

Learning About Your Child's MRI Test

An MRI--or magnetic resonance imaging--is a test that uses a magnetic field and pulses of energy to make detailed pictures of the inside of your child's body.

It looks at organs or other parts of the body to check for signs of disease or problems like bleeding, infection, or an injury.

An MRI gives doctors more information about a problem seen with other tests, such as an X-ray. Before the MRI test, let your doctor know if your child has any health problems or allergies.

Here's how an MRI is done. Your child will put on a hospital gown or scrubs and take off any jewelry.

To help the doctor see organs or blood vessels more clearly, your child may get a dye, called contrast material, through an I.V. tube in the arm.

The dye can make some children have a headache or feel flushed or sick to their stomach.

The MRI machine is loud. So your child may be given earplugs or headphones that play music.

Your child will need to hold still during the test. So the doctor will probably give medicines to help your child relax and feel sleepy.

The test may take up to an hour. You can ask the doctor if it's okay to be in the room with your child.

Your child will lie down on a table that slides into the MRI machine.

Your child may feel air blowing from a fan and hear loud tapping, thumping, or snapping noises. The part of the body being imaged may feel warm.

Depending on the reason for the MRI, your child may go home right after the test.

Children who get medicines to help them relax or lie still may need to wait an hour or two before going home, so the medicines can wear off.

If a dye was used for the test, make sure your child drinks plenty of fluids to help flush out the dye, unless your doctor says not to.

Getting an MRI might seem scary at first, especially for kids. But it's safe and doesn't hurt--it might help to remind kids of that. And hospital staff will be there the whole time to make sure your child is okay.