

MRI with Sedation

(Magnetic Resonance Imaging)

What is an MRI?

Note: child-friendly language in **green**.

- An MRI is a test that uses a large magnet, radio waves, and a computer to take pictures of inside the body. It does not use radiation.
- An MRI scanner (**big, special camera**) has a tunnel with a bed that moves in and out. Some kids say it looks like a spaceship or doughnut.



MRI prep room

Why is it done?

- An MRI is used to produce 2-3 dimensional images of your child's organs, tissues, and bones.
- The MRI can help doctors see tissues anywhere in the body.
- An MRI is often used to diagnose certain conditions and plan for treatments.



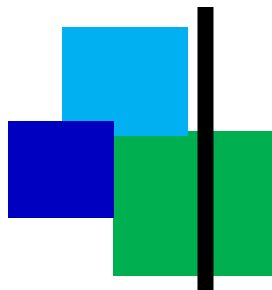
MRI Scanner #3 – Sunset Safari Theme

What can I do to help my child?

- Child life specialists are available to help your child better understand and cope with the scan.
- Parents/caregivers are encouraged to be with their child when he/she is receiving anesthesia, though there are some exceptions.
- Please ask a staff member for more information about these options for support!



Children's National.



What should I expect during the procedure?

The entire exam takes about 3-4 hours and is done in three stages.

Stage 1: Getting ready

- A nurse will call you in advance to provide instructions regarding preparing your child for sedation.
- When you arrive at the hospital, MRI staff will bring you and your child into a small private room (the prep room) to get ready for the exam and record your child's weight and vital signs. A nurse will then ask you questions about your child's health and have your child change into a hospital gown (special picture outfit).
- Next, MRI staff will ask if your child has any metal on or inside his/her body such as jewelry, watches, or pacemakers.
 - * If your child is curious, explain that the MRI scanner (big, special camera) uses magnets to take pictures, so metal is not allowed near it.
 - * We have lockers you may use to store your personal items during your child's exam.
- An anesthesiologist (sleepy medicine doctor) will talk with you and your child about anesthesia (sleepy medicine). Patients usually receive anesthesia through a mask.

Stage 2: Anesthesia

- When your child is ready, MRI staff will walk him/her to the induction room (sleepy medicine room) and help your child get into a comfortable position on the stretcher (bed on wheels).
- An anesthesiologist and nurse will then give your child anesthesia to help him/her fall asleep.
 - * Some children's bodies and eyes move around as they fall asleep; this is very normal.
- Next, you will return to the waiting room and our staff will notify you once your child's scan is done. Scans times vary based on what part of your child's body is being scanned.

Stage 3: Pictures

- Once your child is asleep, if he/she does not already have an IV, one will be placed to enable your child to continue receiving anesthesia and/or fluids throughout the scan.
 - * Your child will not be awake when this occurs. However, you may want to prepare him/her ahead of time for seeing an IV in his/her hand or arm when he /she wakes up.
- Your child will then be wheeled into the scanner (camera) room and gently moved onto the camera bed. MRI staff will provide blankets and attend to your child to ensure he/she is secure. A nurse or anesthesiologist assistant will monitor your child on a one-to-one basis throughout the entire process.
- When your child's pictures are complete, he/she will be taken to a recovery room and a staff member will come get you. When your child wakes up, he/she will be given a drink and/or popsicle.

Tips for preparing your child for a MRI with sedation



A child life specialist (CLS) can help support your child for his/her procedure by explaining it in developmentally appropriate language and suggesting possible coping strategies. If you would like to speak to a CLS before your appointment, see back for contact information.

Infants (Birth– 1 years old):

- Remember you are the biggest comfort to your child. Your presence will help him/her feel as safe and secure as possible .
- If you are prepared mentally and physically, you will be more relaxed around your child.
- Bring familiar objects that comfort your child such as a favorite blanket, toy, or pacifier.
- Remember that children use many different ways to cope. Crying is a healthy and normal way to cope because it allows them to express their emotions.

Toddlers (1-3 years old)

- Begin preparing your child the day before.
- Let your child know that he/she will have special pictures taken so that the doctor can learn about his/her body.
- Use simple words to describe what your child may experience.
- Reassure your child that you will be close.
- Bring comfort items with you that help your child feel safe, such as a favorite toy or blanket.
- Toddlers are learning to be independent and make their own choices; offer them realistic choices. For example, “What stuffed animal should we bring?”

Preschoolers (3-5 years old):

- Begin preparing your child about 1-3 days in advance.
- Talk to your child about why he/she is having pictures taken. For example, “The doctor will be taking special pictures of inside your body to learn more about how your body works.”
- Use simple words to describe what your child may experience.
- Let your child know that a doctor will be giving him/her special medicine to help him/her sleep during the pictures, but that you will be there when he/she goes to sleep and wakes up.
- Encourage your child to ask questions.

School Age (6-years-old and up):

- Prepare your child at least several days in advance.
- Talk to your child about why the doctor wants to take special pictures of inside his/her body. For example, “So the doctor can learn more about how your body works.”
- Explain to your child what he or she might see, hear, and feel in the order things will occur. Use child-friendly and/or real terms depending on your child’s age/preference.
- Let your child know that a doctor will be giving him/her special medicine to help him/her sleep during the pictures, but that you will be there when he/she goes to sleep and wakes up.
- Encourage your child/teen to ask questions.

Child Life

Children's National Hospital Department of Radiology is staffed with Certified Child Life Specialists. Child life specialists are trained to address the emotional and developmental needs of children and their families during healthcare experiences and can provide procedural preparation and support before and during your child's exam.

Contact Information

If you would like to speak to a child life specialist before your child's radiology appointment, please call **202-476-3338** or email **childliferadiology@childrensnational.org**.

Created by Children's National Child Life Services

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