

MRI scan - neonatology

Parent information

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is a scanning technique using a very powerful magnet to produce images of any part of the body. It is a safe procedure as no radiation is used. The scan usually takes between 20 and 60 minutes depending on which part of the body is being examined.

An MRI is:

- able to clearly look at different types of tissue in the body
- able to be taken without changing your baby's position
- especially useful for seeing and diagnosing changes in the brain
- non-invasive and has no side effects.

What happens before the MRI scan?

- The need for your baby to have an MRI scan will be discussed with you by your baby's doctor. Your doctor will explain what information they hope to gain from the scan and ask for your consent.
- MRI is performed at the RBWH Medical Imaging Department (Level 3).
- A safety check is performed before the MRI to ensure that your baby has no metal objects or materials on them before they go into the MRI's magnetic field.
- Sometimes your baby may need to skip a feed before the procedure depending on what images are being taken.
- A nurse from ICN/SCN will escort your baby to the MRI and stay with them during the procedure. If your baby requires respiratory support a doctor will also stay with your baby.

Can you go with your baby to the MRI scan?

- Yes, you can walk with your baby to MRI.
- You can also watch your baby through the window, being placed into the MRI.
- While the scan is being done you can wait in the waiting room just outside the MRI.

What happens during the MRI scan?

The MRI scan requires baby to remain perfectly still for the duration of the procedure. There are two main methods we use to achieve this, both of which are very safe:

- Baby can be wrapped up snugly in a special beanbag. This gently secures baby in a comfortable, safe position.
- Baby may be placed in a specially designed cot to be transferred to the MRI department. This method is used most often when a baby needs breathing support (e.g. CPAP or ventilation).

- There are lights in the MRI room, so it will not be dark.
- Your baby is fully monitored, and the scan can be stopped at any time if your baby needs attention.
- Some babies will need a small amount of sedation to keep them completely still. If your baby needs this, we will speak to you before the scan.
- Some babies may need a small injection of contrast through a drip. This depends on which images are being taken. The contrast used for babies is very safe and passes out of the body through the urine.
- The MRI scanner can be noisy, so all babies have earmuffs to wear.

What happens after the MRI scan?

- Baby will return to ICN/SCN and continue their day the same as before the scan.
- A radiologist will provide a written report to the referring doctor, which can take one to three business days.
- Once the report has been completed a doctor will let you know the results of the scan.

Points to remember

- The machine is noisy but does not hurt the baby.
- Your baby will need to remain still in order to get clear pictures.
- In rare cases if your baby cannot remain still enough, they may need to be scanned again.
- Some babies require an injection of contrast.

Any further questions?

This fact sheet provides general information.

If you have any questions about your baby's care, we encourage you speak to the nursing and medical staff.



Consumers contributed
to this information.