

Having an MRI?
How to best prepare your child

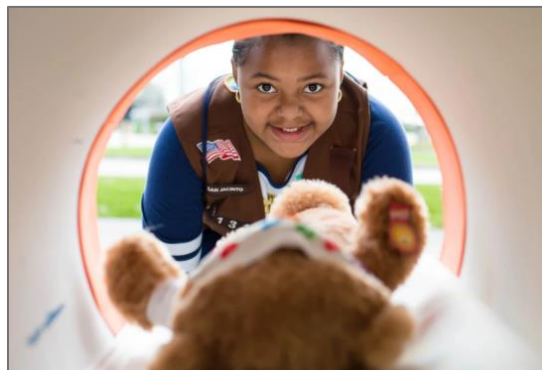


**Texas Children's
Hospital®**

Having an MRI?

What is an MRI?

An MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is a safe medical scan that takes clear pictures of the inside of the body. It uses a strong magnet and radio waves to create these images. MRI scans do **not** use X-rays or radiation. The pictures help doctors see organs, muscles, joints, and other soft tissues so they can better understand your child's health.



What Happens During the MRI?

- Your child will lie on a table that slides into the MRI machine
- The MRI makes loud knocking or beeping sounds. Earplugs and headphones are provided.
- Watch preparation [video](#)

Why MRI is safe and why safety rules matter?

MRI is considered very safe when proper safety rules are followed. The magnet is **always on** and extremely powerful, so certain metal objects can become dangerous if brought into the MRI room. Items such as keys, phones, jewelry, wigs, or medical implants that are not MRI-compatible can be pulled toward the magnet, posing a serious risk of injury or equipment damage. This is why strict screening and safety procedures are in place—to protect patients, staff, and visitors at all times.

MRI Safety Screening Form

A completed MRI safety screening form is required prior to your MRI appointment. If you have MyChart, please complete the form electronically before your visit. If you do not have MyChart, the form will be provided at check-in and must be completed by a legal guardian.

- Parent, guardian, or individual accompanying the patient will also need to fill out MRI safety screening form upon arrival at check in.
- Before going into the MRI area, the patient and any accompanying individual will be screened and cleared by the Radiology MRI care team.

Things that can cause your MRI to be cancelled or rescheduled

The following pertains to Patients, Parent/Guardian, Accompanying Individual. Due to possible injury to any individual, including staff, please let us know of any implant, body decoration, dental appliance.

- **Implants:** (ex. Ear tubes, pacemaker, shunt, baclofen pump, VNS)
 - Please mention any implants at the time of scheduling
- **Body Decoration:** Piercings, Jewelry, Wigs, Hair extensions, Tattoos
 - Please have all piercings and jewelry removed. If unable to remove before or at time of imaging, you may be cancelled.
 - Parent, guardian, or accompanying individual for Non Sedate MRI will need to remove piercing, jewelry, and wigs.
- **Dental appliances** – expanders, spacers, braces
 - Most appliances are safe – however, there is a chance of heating. This may lead to having MRI done without anesthesia.
 - Depending on exam – might need to have dental device removed.
- **Other:** BB's, shrapnel

WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR APPOINTMENT

Why everyone must change before entering the MRI room

To ensure **MRI Safety**, anyone entering the MRI scan room must change into approved clothing to ensure there is **no hidden metal** on or in their clothing. Changing clothes helps maintain a safe environment and ensures high-quality images. Following these rules allows MRI exams to be performed safely and effectively for everyone involved.

Changing before the MRI

- Your child will change into hospital-approved clothing. Your Child will be given a gown, paper shorts, and socks.
 - **Refusal to change** will lead to exam being rescheduled.
- All personal items will be placed in a locker
- One parent, guardian, or accompanying individual may stay with the child during **non-sedated** MRI exams.
 - The accompanying individual must also change into MRI-safe clothing. One or two gowns, paper shorts, and socks will be provided.
 - **Refusal to change** will keep you from going back with your child as this is a safety concern.
 - We are not permitted to watch any unattended children. If accompanying your child for MRI please have someone else here to watch siblings.
- All personal items will be placed in a locker

Why This Matters

- The magnet can pull metal objects quickly, causing injury
- Clothing material can heat up and cause burns
- Metal or sticky patches on the skin can cause skin burns

👉 For your safety, always tell the care team about anything in or on your body or child's body before the MRI.

MRI CARE TEAM

To ensure patient and staff safety, the MRI care team will complete a standardized safety protocol prior to anyone entering the MRI environment. This process includes verification of appropriate attire and confirmation that the MRI metal screening form has been fully completed and reviewed.

The care team will also conduct a visual safety assessment to identify any external metallic objects or safety concerns. These inspections are performed in a private and respectful manner to maintain patient comfort and dignity.

If you have any questions, concerns, or specific needs during this process, please notify a member of your care team.

Please note:

The care team **will not** perform visual inspections of the following areas:

- The breast/chest area
- The groin/pelvic area

👉 If you have any metal objects like piercings in these areas, you must remove them. This helps ensure that you don't get hurt during the MRI test

MRI With Anesthesia

Some children need anesthesia to help them sleep during the scan.

Before the Appointment

- A Radiology Nurse will call a few days before your scheduled MRI exam
- You'll review medical history, medications, and preparation steps

On the Day of the MRI

- An Anesthesia Provider will meet with you
- Your child will need an IV as part of the requirement for anesthesia or contrast administration.
- Parent, guardian, or individual accompanying the patient can stay with patient until they fall asleep (however, this is up to the discretion of your Anesthesiologist)
- From there the Parent, guardian, or individual accompanying the patient, will be escorted to the lobby.
- When exam is done, and patient is in recovery, you will be escorted to the patient.

Eating & Drinking Rules

- Solid foods: Until **midnight** or **8 hours before arrival**
- Infant formula or non-human milk: Until **6 hours before arrival**
- Breast milk: Until **4 hours before arrival**
- Clear liquids (water, Pedialyte®, apple juice, Jell-O®, soft drinks, other clear juices):
Up to 1 hour before arrival
- No Orange juice

Medications may be taken with a small sip of water unless told otherwise.

If these rules are not followed, the MRI may be delayed or cancelled for safety reasons

After MRI

If your child received anesthesia, he or she may be sleepy and unsteady from the anesthetic for several hours. Your child may have a red face or be slightly swollen around the face and eyes, but should better within 24 hours. Your child may wake up feeling hungry. When he or she is wide awake, the recovery nurse will give clear liquids such as Pedialyte, apple juice, Sprite or water. If your child does not throw up during the next 30 minutes, he or she can eat normally.

Activity level

To prevent accidents, closely monitor your child for the next 24 to 48 hours. Walk with your child, holding hands even if he or she seems to walk without trouble. It is also important to help your child in the bathroom. The sedative and the test may disrupt your child's routine. You may notice a change of behavior for the rest of the day. Some children may become cranky. Some children sleep for hours. Others need to stay up late because of the time they slept during the test. Try to be patient. Things will be back to normal the next day.

Receiving the results of your MRI

Call your physician for a follow-up appointment as instructed. You can also call your ordering physician for results 24 to 48 hours after the test.

Can My Child Have an MRI Without Anesthesia?

Many children *can* have an MRI without anesthesia — this depends on their age, comfort level, and ability to stay very still.

Age and Development

- Most children **7–8 years and older** can often complete an MRI without anesthesia.
- Younger children may be able to if they can follow instructions and stay still.

Ability to Hold Still

- An MRI requires lying still for **20–90 minutes**, depending on the exam.
- Could be longer if multiple exams
- Movement can blur images and may require repeating the scan.
- **If your child has trouble staying still, the exam may need to be rescheduled with anesthesia.**

Comfort with the MRI Environment

- The scanner is **loud** and **confined**.
- Children who have anxiety, sensory sensitivity, or claustrophobia may struggle—though ear protection and coaching help.

Exam Type and Length

- Shorter studies (e.g., brain MRI without contrast) are more likely to be done awake.
- Longer or more detailed exams may still require anesthesia.
- Your child may need an IV if contrast is required

Support Options

We use many techniques to help kids succeed without anesthesia.

Common options include:

- Age-appropriate preparation and coaching
- Practice MRIs or mock scanners (available at Main Campus and West Campus)



TCH West Campus Mock Scanner



TCH Main Campus Mock Scanner

- Movies, music, or video goggles (if available)
- Child Life Specialist support
- Parent presence when allowed
 - For safety reasons, staff are unable to supervise unattended children. Please ensure another adult is available to care for any accompanying siblings.

Scheduling Your Child's MRI

If you have not been contacted within 48 hours after the MRI order, please give us a call.

Houston Campuses

- Texas Medical Center: 832-824-9729
- West Campus: 832-227-1206
- The Woodlands: 832-824-9729

Austin North Campus

- Radiology Scheduling: 737-220-8377
- Radiology Department: 737-229-2080

Parking Information

- Medical Center:
 - Sedated Appointments: Valet parking is free on MRI day
 - Non-sedated Appointments: Parking & rate information listed [here](#)
- West Campus: Free self-parking
- The Woodlands: Free self-parking
- Austin North: Free self-parking

Maps and directions are [available](#)

We're Here to Help!

If you have questions or concerns at any time, please reach out. Our team is here to keep your child safe, comfortable, and supported every step of the way.