



Getting Ready...

My Child Is Having A CT Scan



INOVA[®] FAIRFAX
HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN





Welcome to Inova Fairfax Hospital for Children. Your child is going to have a CT scan, and it's important that both of you understand what will happen. This booklet will help educate you about the procedure so that you can explain it to your child. However, it does not replace information given to you by physicians, radiology technologists and other members of your child's medical team.

What is a CT Scan?

CT stands for computerized tomography. CT scans use advanced X-ray technology to study different parts of the body. Using CT technology, the medical team can see tissues, blood vessels, organs and bones in very close detail.

One advantage of this procedure is that a CT scan can produce a clear image with little or no discomfort. These images can give doctors important information on a particular part of the body (*Figure 1*).

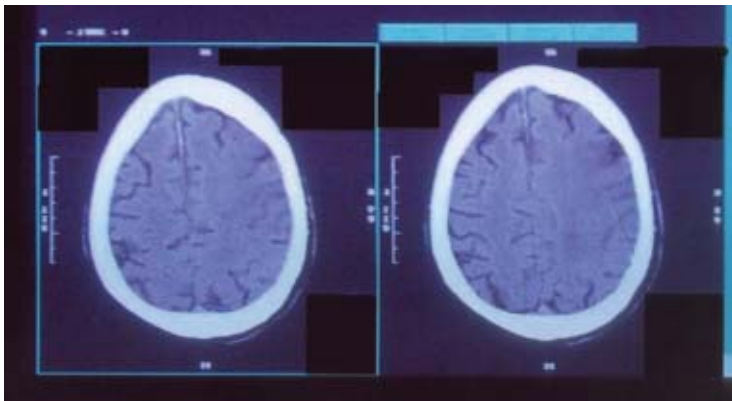


Figure 1: *CT Image of the Head*



What are the Steps Involved in a CT Scan?

Each CT scan is different, depending on the part of the body that is to be studied and the type of scan that is necessary. Some children may need to drink a material called contrast before their scan. Others also may need IV contrast to be injected during their scan. Your child's medical team should discuss this with you prior to the appointment.

- You will be asked to remove any metal from your child, such as jewelry or clothing with zippers.
- The CT technologist will help your child into the correct position for the scan.
- The bed will move into the center of the CT scanner for the pictures. The CT scanner is a large square machine with a round hole in the center (*Figure 2*). During the CT scan, your child will need to lie very still.

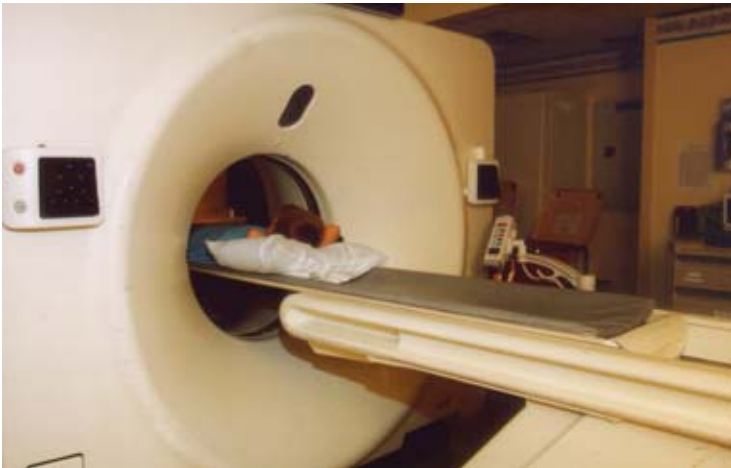


Figure 2



- If your child needs contrast, a technologist will inject the contrast as your child is lying on the bed.
- The CT scan will last five to 10 minutes. You may stay in the room with your child for support unless you are pregnant, in which case you must wait outside.
- The results of the CT scan will be sent to your child's referring physician.

If your child needs sedation or anesthesia for the CT scan, he or she will receive medication prior to the scan. Your child will then go to a recovery area after the scan until he or she is fully awake. If your child needs this service, you should have received specific instructions when scheduling the appointment.

What Will My Child Feel During the CT?

Your child will not feel the CT scan itself. If your child requires liquid contrast, he or she will have to drink it before the scan. Although the contrast is mixed with juice, some children dislike the taste of the mixture. If you know that your child will need this contrast, you may bring a drink of your child's choice in which to mix the contrast. This liquid must be clear, such as fruit juice or clear soda.

If your child requires IV contrast, he or she will feel the IV as it is inserted. This may be temporarily uncomfortable. As the contrast is being injected, your child may feel a warm sensation in his or her body, and may experience a metallic taste in the mouth. This effect will last only a few minutes.

The CT scanner will make a sound similar to a whirling fan or washing machine as it is working. This will not be loud, and should not distress your child.



How Can I Prepare My Child for the CT Scan?

When and how to prepare your child for the CT scan depends on his or her age and the type of scan needed. If your child is receiving sedation or anesthesia, or if your child requires oral contrast, he or she may not eat for a certain period of time before the procedure.

In addition to physical preparation, it is also important to explain the CT scan to your child to get him or her ready. When children understand their procedures, they are more likely to have successful outcomes.

Most children are concerned with what they will see and feel. It is helpful to describe what the CT scanner looks and sounds like. You may choose to show your child some of the pictures in this book.

If your child needs IV contrast, it is helpful to prepare him or her for the temporary discomfort. Many children will ask,





“Will it hurt?” It is important to be honest with your child and resist saying that it won’t hurt. A good alternative is to say, “I can’t promise that it won’t hurt, but it will be very quick,” or “The IV may be uncomfortable for a second, but I’ll help you through it.” Taking deep breaths, squeezing hands, and having something else to focus on are all things that can help your child cope with the IV placement.

When you arrive for your appointment, your child may see the equipment before the scan is started. We encourage you and your child to ask questions of the staff to better understand the CT scan. By talking about it ahead of time, you may help your child feel less anxious.

Inova Fairfax Hospital for Children is staffed with child life specialists who address the psychosocial, developmental and educational needs of children and their families in the hospital, including those children undergoing outpatient procedures. Child life specialists can provide procedure preparation, medical play, and procedure support to decrease anxiety and increase coping in children. If you would like to speak to a child life specialist about your child’s appointment, please call the Child Life Department at **703-204-6486**.

What Happens After the CT Scan?

Your child’s CT scan will be read by a radiologist and the results will be given to your referring physician. You may then follow up with your referring physician to discuss the results.

If your child’s physician requires that you bring films to a follow-up appointment, you may check out the films from the



film library. Your child's films will be available the day after the appointment. We recommend that you call ahead so that the film library staff may prepare the films for your pick-up.

Film Library

703-698-3240

Hours: 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.

7 days a week

We hope that this has given you useful information to help you and your child prepare for the appointment. If you have any questions about how to prepare your child for his or her CT scan, please call the Child Life Department at **703-204-6486**.



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about how to prepare
your child for this appointment,
call the Child Life Department:
703-204-6486.**



Inova Health System is a not-for-profit health care system based in Northern Virginia that consists of hospitals and other health services including emergency and urgent care centers, home care, nursing homes, mental health and blood donor services, and wellness classes. Governed by a voluntary board of community members, Inova's mission is to provide quality care and improve the health of the diverse communities we serve.

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