

Getting an MRI

Magnetic Resonance Imaging



What is an MRI with anesthesia?

- An MRI is an imaging study that uses powerful magnets and radio waves to take detailed pictures of the inside of the body.
- General anesthesia is medicine that will make your child sleepy and then fall asleep as if they are taking a nap. General anesthesia allows your child to remain completely still for the MRI scan, so that the images are clear.
- This medicine is given through a mask or an IV (a small catheter in their arm).
- Your child will not be able to eat or drink before the scan to avoid the risk of food or liquids entering the lungs while under anesthesia (known as aspiration).
 - Please refer to the preparation flyer for specific instructions. If you tell us that your child has had something to eat or drink, we may need to postpone the procedure for your child's safety.

What happens during an MRI with anesthesia?

Part 1: Meeting the team

- After you and your child check in, the staff will bring you to meet the team.
- An MRI technologist will review the safety questionnaire.
- A nurse will review your child's medical history and then take their height, weight, and vital signs.
- The anesthesiologists will meet with you and review your child's medical history, the anesthesia plan, and answer any questions.
- If available, a child life specialist will meet with your child to prepare them in developmentally appropriate language and support them while they receive anesthesia.
- Your child will change into a hospital gown. Any metal must be removed before entering the scanner (jewelry, glasses, hairpins, retainers, phone, and wallet).

Part 2: Getting anesthesia

- If your child is eight months or older, one caregiver can be present at the bedside while the anesthesia is given at the discretion of the anesthesiologist.
- Your child will lie on the bed while you stand next to them.
- If your child is given the mask, they will breathe in the medication.
- If your child is getting an IV, the anesthesia team will place the IV and then give the medication.
- It is normal for your child's eyes to roll back and their body to move while they are falling asleep.
- Once your child is asleep, a member of the team will escort you to the waiting room.

- If your child fell asleep with a mask, the team will then place an IV to give medicine and fluids.
- A breathing device will be placed in your child's mouth to help your child breathe.

Part 3: Waking Up

- The length of the MRI will depend on which area of your child's body is getting scanned.
- Around 20 minutes before your child's scan is complete, the technologist will either call your cell phone or come retrieve you from the waiting area.
- When the scan is finished, your child may still be sleepy or they might be awake. If they are sleepy, it is best to let them fully wake up on their own.
- One caregiver can go to the recovery room where your child will be safely monitored by the nurses until they are ready to go home.
- If there are two caregivers, one will wait in the waiting room across the hall from the recovery room.
- When your child is fully awake, the nurse will remove the IV, which feels like a Band-Aid coming off, and your child will change back into their clothes.
- Your child can eat and drink normally after leaving the recovery room.

To schedule a preparation/education session:



A child life specialist (CLS) can help support your child during their MRI with anesthesia by explaining it in developmentally appropriate language, suggesting possible coping strategies, and supporting them while they get anesthesia. If you would like to speak to a child life specialist prior to your child's

radiology appointment, please email radiologychildlife@mountsinai.org



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How can I prepare my child?

Be sure to follow the prep instructions given to you when you schedule the appointment.

Infants (up to 12 months old)

- Bring comfort items such as a pacifier, blanket, or favorite toy.
- Remember crying is a healthy and normal way for infants to express their emotions.
- You are your child's biggest comfort.

Toddlers (one to two years old)

- Start preparing your child the day before with simple words.
- Tell your child that they will have pictures taken so that the doctor can learn more about their body.
- Tell your child that they will get sleepy medicine for the pictures.
- Reassure your child that you will be there for the pictures.
- Toddlers want to be independent and make their own choices, so you can ask them what comfort items they will bring.

Preschoolers (three to five years old)

- Start preparing your child a few days in advance.
- Tell your child that they will have pictures taken so that the doctor can learn more about their body.
- The CT camera will look like a big donut!
- Tell your child that they will get sleepy medicine for the pictures.
- Reassure your child that you will be there for the pictures.
- Please reach out to our child life specialist for additional preparation materials

School age and up (six years old and up)

- Prepare your child at least a few days in advance.
- Tell your child why they are having the pictures taken. You can relate it to any symptoms they might be experiencing.
- You can review the first section of this flyer with your child to help prepare them for the test.
- Talk to your child about different ways they can cope including if/how they want to be distracted and if they want to be told what is happening each step of the way.
- Encourage your child to ask questions

How can I help as a caregiver?

- Encourage your child to take deep breaths and squeeze your hands while they fall asleep.
- Some kids like to sing their favorite song while they fall asleep or talk about their favorite things. You can ask your child if they would like to sing or talk while they fall asleep.
- We encourage caregivers to help contribute to a calming environment as your child will look to you for emotional cues.

