

PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR A CARDIAC MRI OR CT SCAN

Your child's doctor has ordered a cardiac MRI or CT scan. You need to talk to your child before the appointment to prepare for these scans. Children who are prepared for medical procedures:

- Cope better and are calmer.
- Show less distress.
- Have less pain.
- Have fewer behavior problems after procedures.

You may feel unsure about how to talk to your child before the procedure. There are many reasons for this:

- It may be hard to find the words that will help your child understand.
- You may not fully understand the procedure yourself.
- You may worry that what you say will make your child more anxious.

Not talking about the procedure beforehand can have negative effects for your child, such as:

- More anxiety on the day of the procedure.
- Less trust in caregivers to be truthful.
- More fear of medical staff.

Please use the information included here as a guide for when and how to talk to your child. Please see the cardiac MRI or cardiac CT scan handout to learn more about your child's specific scan.

When and how should I talk with my child about the cardiac MRI or CT scan?

The amount and type of information your child needs before a medical procedure may depend on age, emotional maturity, and experience with stressful events.

General tips for preparing your child

- Children under the age of 6 years should be prepared 1-2 days before the scan.
- Children between the ages of 6 and 12 years can be prepared up to 1 week before the scan.

- Children over the age of 12 (teenagers) should take part in deciding to have the procedure and when scheduling the procedure.

Specific ways to prepare your child for a scan

- Learn about the procedure yourself. This will help you explain it to your child. See separate handout on your child's cardiac MRI or cardiac CT scan.
- Be open and honest, and use simple language.
- Explain what your child will see, hear, feel, taste or touch.
- Encourage your child to ask questions. Let these questions guide how much and what type of information is wanted.
- Help your child understand the reason for the CT scan or MRI.
- Let your child know that it is ok to be nervous. Talk to your child about ways to stay calm during the procedure.
- Your child may ask questions you cannot answer. In that case, tell your child you will ask the medical team for the answer.

Where can I turn for help?

You can call the Kentucky Children's Hospital Child Life Department at (859) 323-6551. Child Life Specialists can help your child and other family members prepare for and cope with procedures the day of the appointment. It is important to call if:

- Your child has developmental delays or other special needs.
- Your child has difficult or traumatic hospital experiences in the past.
- Your child has a lot of anxiety about the procedure.