Your Child’s CT Scan : What to Expect

A CT scan uses X-rays and computers to take special pictures of the body. A CT scan takes more pictures than a regular X-ray, and the pictures are clearer, so the doctor can see things that can’t be seen on an X-ray. Here’s what will happen when your child gets a CT scan.

HOW IS A CT SCAN PERFORMED?

- You and your child will meet the imaging technologist, who will take you to the CT scan room and take the special pictures.
- The scanner is a large machine that has a hole in the middle that looks like a donut. The narrow, “skinny” bed inside the machine can move up and down or back forth to take pictures.
- Your child will be placed gently on the bed and wear a seatbelt for safety when the bed moves.
- It is important for your child to know that the scanner will not touch their body, and that it will make whirring noises.
- A parent is usually allowed to stay with the child during the scan to help them feel more relaxed and comfortable. If for some reason you are not able to stay in the room, we will reassure your child that you are watching and can hear if they need anything.
- Sometimes the CT scan may need “contrast” to help get the clearest picture inside the body.
- If the scan does need contrast, a special liquid will be given by mouth or through an IV or rectal tube.
- If your child needs an IV for his/her scan, a numbing cream can be used at the insertion point to reduce any discomfort.

- The pediatric radiologist and technologist will work together to ensure that a low-dose CT scan is performed to minimize radiation dose while getting high-quality pictures.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD?

- You can usually stay with your child while the CT scan takes place*
- Tell your child that it is important to hold still
- Praise your child during and after the procedure

* Women who are pregnant will not be allowed in the CT scan room. (Please note that other children will not be allowed in the CT scan room.)

For additional questions regarding your child’s CT scan, please contact the pediatric imaging child life specialist at 617-724-1153.