



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# CT head scan

**Issued by Child Health**



This leaflet has been produced to provide you with information about CT head scans for babies and young children who have been seen for a child protection medical assessment. If you have any further questions, please ask the doctor looking after your child.

## **What is a CT head scan?**

A CT head scan is special type of x-ray that looks at the skull bones and the brain.

## **Why is my child having a CT head scan?**

A CT head scan looks for signs of injury to the brain and bones of the skull. Young children and babies do not always show signs of these sorts of injuries when examined by a doctor. The doctor looking after your child will explain why this test is needed for your child.

## **Where is the CT head scan done?**

The scan is performed in the x-ray department.

## **What happens during a CT head scan?**

To get a clear picture, it is important that your child is as still as possible during the scan. For babies and infants, the best way to do the scan is when your child is asleep and wrapped in a blanket. Usually we will wait until your child next has a feed and falls asleep. One of the nurses from the ward will then take you and your child to the x-ray department. You will be met by the people who do the scans (radiographers) and they will help you place your child on the scanner in the correct position.

You will have to step outside the room whilst the scan is done but if your child wakes up and starts moving or crying, the scan will be stopped and you will be able to go in and settle your child. You will usually be able to watch your child during the scan from the x-ray control room.

Once the scan is finished, the nurse will bring you and your child back to the ward.

## **How long will it take?**

The scan itself only takes a few minutes. It will also take a few minutes to position your child in the right position on the scanner.

## **Are there any risks to my child from having a CT head scan?**

A CT head scan does mean that your child is exposed to radiation. The amount of radiation from a CT head scan is about the same as 3 to 6 months background radiation. Background radiation is the very low dose of radiation we are all exposed to naturally from the earth. There is a link between radiation from CT head scans and some types of childhood cancer but the risk is very, very small. Care is taken to ensure that the amount of radiation used for your child's scan is as low as possible. We would not be arranging the CT scan if we did not think it was important to get the information the test can give us. Please ask the doctor looking after your child if you would like more information about this.

## **How will you get the results of the CT head scan?**

The doctor looking after your child will come and speak to you about the results. This will usually be the same day that the scan has been done.

**If you have any further questions about the test, please ask the doctor caring for your child.**

## Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

## Other sources of information

### NHS 111

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 07815 500015

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

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