



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Skeletal survey

Issued by Child Health

building a caring future

HOSPITAL | COMMUNITY | HOME

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

This leaflet has been produced to provide you with information about skeletal surveys for 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 skeletal survey?

A skeletal survey is a set of x-rays of all the bones in the body. It involves taking about 25 small x-rays of different parts of the body, not just one big x-ray of the whole body.

Why is my child having a skeletal survey?

A skeletal survey is performed to look for any abnormality or injury to the bones. The doctor looking after your child will explain why this investigation is needed.

Where does the skeletal survey take place?

The skeletal survey is performed in the x-ray department.

What happens during a skeletal survey?

One of the nurses from the ward will take you and your child to the x-ray department. You will be met by the people who take the x-rays (radiographers).

To get a clear picture, it is important that your child is as still as possible during the x-ray. This means that we will need to hold your child quite firmly for a few seconds while each x-ray is taken. The radiographers will show you and the nurse how to hold your child while each x-ray is taken.

It does not hurt, but some children can get upset because they do not like being held still. It is a good idea to bring a feed, dummy or a toy along to help settle your child if needed.

You will be asked to wear a protective apron to help prevent you being exposed to x-rays during the survey.

If you are pregnant or you think that you may be then it would not be advisable for you to be the one holding your child while the x-rays are taken. Please inform the radiographer if this is the case. If possible, it would be useful if another person who knows your child well can help instead.

How long will it take?

It will take about 30 minutes for all the x-rays to be taken. The x-rays then need to be checked by one of the x-ray doctors (radiologist) to see if they are happy that they can see all the bones clearly. They sometimes ask for some more x-rays to be taken before your child goes back to the ward.

How much radiation is there in a skeletal survey?

The amount of radiation from a skeletal survey is about the same as 4 to 8 months background radiation. Background radiation is the very low dose of radiation we are all exposed to naturally from the earth. We would not be arranging the skeletal survey if we did not think it was important to get the information the test can give us. If you would like to discuss this further, please ask the doctor looking after your child.

How will you get the results of the skeletal survey?

The doctor looking after your child will explain when the results are likely to be available and discuss the best way to let you know the results.

Will my child need any of the x-rays to be repeated?

We will repeat the chest x-ray and upper and lower limb x-rays about 10-14 days after the full skeletal survey. Other x-rays may need to be repeated as well but your child's doctor will explain if this is necessary.

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

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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