



Skeletal Survey information leaflet for parents/carers

What is a skeletal survey?

A skeletal survey is a set of x-rays to image all the bones in your child's body and a computed tomography (CT) head scan of your child's brain and skull. The x-rays are a two part examination which take place over two separate appointments.

What x-ray and scans will be needed?

Your child will require a skeletal survey and a CT head scan. A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan of the head and spine may also be necessary.

What happens during the skeletal survey?

First Appointment

The first appointment involves around 25 x-rays and a CT scan of the head. It should take around an hour to complete the x-rays, and the CT scan will be done at the same time, it takes about 30 minutes.

Second Appointment

The second appointment takes place around two weeks later. It involves around 11 x-rays and takes roughly 30 minutes.

The skeletal survey is not complete until the second appointment takes place.

Who is involved?

All imaging is carried out by radiographers, who are skilled in working with children. They will help you and your child throughout. A nurse or other healthcare professional will also be present to support you and your child.

The survey

It is very important your child keeps still during x-rays. This helps to ensure that we obtain the necessary images quickly and efficiently. You are encouraged to remain with your child, you can help hold them, comfort and distract them throughout the survey.

Should I bring anything?

Although the examination is not painful, you may want to bring a comforter or their favourite toy. It is not unusual for a child to become upset during this examination as they are being held still for

the x-rays. It is really useful if you bring their bottle with them to comfort them or for older children a drink and snack.

What if I am pregnant?

If you are, or may be, pregnant you will not be able to stay with your child for the examination. You may wish for another familiar adult to be with your child.

How will I get the results of the test?

No results can be provided at these examinations. All imaging requires a report from a consultant paediatric radiologist. The report is sent to the doctor looking after your child.

Radiation dose

Your child will not be exposed to any more x-rays and scans than is absolutely necessary to complete the survey.

Before any examination that uses radiation is carried out, the benefits of having the examination is closely weighed against the risks of the radiation itself. We continually review our equipment to ensure our radiation doses are as low as possible. This procedure is standardised across NHS Borders, Fife and Lothian. We operate in joint partnership to provide a high standard of imaging for your child.

We are all exposed to natural background radiation all the time from the sun and the earth. X-rays do give a small additional dose of radiation. The amount of x-rays we use in a skeletal survey is considered very low dose and equates to approximately 4 weeks of natural background radiation. A CT scan is also considered as low dose. This is the same as 1-2 years of natural background radiation.

If you assist in holding your child still during these X-rays, you will be provided with a lead apron to wear. Your dose will be equivalent to around three days of natural background radiation. This is a negligible risk.

If you have any further questions please discuss with the doctor looking after your child. We are here to support you and your child.