

Let's talk about...

Getting Ready for Your MRI

An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is a special way for doctors to take pictures of the inside of your body. It uses magnets and radio waves—not radiation—to see how things look. Here is how you can get ready!

Tips for Getting Ready

- **Talk about it:** It is best to start talking about the MRI a few days before the appointment if you are younger, or a week before if you are older. This gives you time to ask questions.
- **Practice staying still:** You will need to stay very still for 30 to 90 minutes. You can practice at home by lying still and listening to [these MRI sounds](#).
- **Make a “Coping Plan”:** When you practice, try closing your eyes and imagining your favorite place, like a beach or a park.
- **Meet a helper:** A Child Life Specialist might call your family before the visit to help make a plan and answer questions. They will be there during your appointment, too.



What You Will See

- **The MRI Team:** You will meet a technologist who knows everything about the machine.
- **The Machine:** The MRI machine looks like a giant donut, a spaceship, or a long tunnel. What do you think it looks like?
- **Movie System:** Watching a movie may be possible during the MRI. This can help with coping and will be offered by the MRI team as appropriate.

For more information or to connect with a Child Life Specialist, please visit: <http://ucdavis.health/childlife>



What You Will Hear

- **Loud noises:** The machine makes loud knocking and clicking sounds. You will get earplugs to help keep things quiet.

What You Will Feel

- **Hospital pajamas:** Before your MRI, you will change into comfortable hospital pajamas.
- **Moving bed:** You will lie on a bed that slides slowly into the scanner.
- **“Picture Water”:** Sometimes, doctors use “contrast” (which we call “picture water”) to make the photos clearer. This usually goes through an IV, which is a tiny, soft tube that helps the water get into your body.
- **Family close by:** A parent or caregiver can stay in the room with you. They will be cleared by the MRI team beforehand for safety.