

Image Gently: How you can reduce radiation exposure to your child

Most radiation exposure is through background radiation each of us is exposed to just from living on earth. From the soil to the sun, radiation is a part of normal daily life.

Diagnostic tests that use radiation, like X-rays, CT scans, fluoroscopy, interventional radiology and nuclear medicine can save lives. But they should be done only if truly necessary, especially for children. While an X-ray may give off minimal radiation, tests like a CT scan may give a much higher dose.

Why are children more susceptible to the effects of radiation?

When a child is growing, the cells are dividing rapidly: It's easier to injure a dividing cell. Also, the earlier any radiation dose occurs, the more time is given for any radiation-influenced changes to occur.

Does a child receive a different amount of radiation than an adult?

At Doernbecher, we have special guidelines for imaging children; they are not given the same amount of radiation as an adult.

Is Doernbecher taking other steps to reduce radiation exposure?

CT scanners used for children feature a new system of image reconstruction that improves the quality of an image even when a lower dose is used. This innovative technology has allowed us to reduce radiation dosage by 40-60 percent in our CT scans.*

In addition, Doernbecher trauma and ED physicians have eliminated cervical spine CT scans as an initial mode of imaging diagnosis for pediatric trauma patients.

How are patients protected during tests?

When possible, the technologist will shield parts of the body that are outside the imaged area, so they are not exposed to radiation.

Are there other tests that don't involve radiation that can be used on my child?

MRI and ultrasound procedures do not involve radiation. An X-ray involves an extremely small amount of radiation. Ask your doctor if there are other tests that can help your child. Also, if your child does require a CT scan, excess radiation can be avoided. Examinations are repeated only when necessary.

What does "Image Gently" mean?

"Image Gently" simply refers to being conservative about radiation dosage in children. Sometimes a different exam or watchful observation may suffice without the need for a test.

How can I learn more?

Doernbecher has radiologists who specialize in pediatric care. If you've got a question about your child's procedures, don't hesitate to contact Doernbecher at **503 346-0640** or **888 346-0645**.

**Brain CT excepted.*