

Skeletal survey x-rays

Information for parents, guardians and carers

This leaflet explains what happens when your child has a skeletal survey using x-ray imaging when physical abuse is suspected. If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the radiologist caring for your child.

Why does my child need this examination?

King's College Hospital has a duty to protect the children we see. We encourage – and expect – our staff to raise concerns if they believe the care or welfare of a child is at risk. Although this can be upsetting and difficult for you if you have parental responsibility, the welfare and wellbeing of your child comes first. If any concerns are raised, it is important that we investigate them fully. As part of the investigation, it is essential to identify any injuries.

Consent

We must by law obtain your written consent to any operation and some other procedures beforehand. Staff will explain the risks, benefits and alternatives, before they ask you to sign the consent form. If you are unsure about any aspect of the procedure or treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to speak with a senior member of staff again.

Skeletal survey – stage 1

This examination usually takes about one hour in total, although it can take longer if your child is distressed or needs comforting. They will have x-rays of their whole body which will take about 25 – 30 minutes. At least two radiographers will do these x-rays. Your child will have them in a special room and a nurse from the ward will come with you both and be present during the tests. This examination is only complete when a radiologist has checked all the x-rays to make sure they have all the information they need.

Sometimes we offer your child sedation because of the number of x-rays they are having and length of time this takes. If this is needed, the doctors will discuss it with you.

Skeletal survey – stage 2

Sometimes recent injuries do not show up on the first set of x-rays and can only be seen later. So, your child will have a second, shorter set of x-rays taken about two weeks later.

We will give you and your child an appointment for this second visit after the first appointment.

How can I help my child during the tests?

It is important that your child stays still while each x-ray is taken, so you may be asked to hold them. Our staff will show you how to do this safely. You will be able to comfort your child between x-rays if they are unhappy or distressed. You will be given a protective lead apron to wear for safety reasons.

If possible, please bring spare nappies, milk or water, a favourite toy or comforter, and dress your child in clothing that can be easily taken off.

If you are pregnant, or could be pregnant, please let the radiographer know because you will not be allowed to hold your child. If you are breastfeeding your child, we can allow time for this during the examination.

When will I get the results of the examination?

The radiographers will not know the results straightaway. A consultant radiologist will need to check these x-ray images and write a report. The results will be sent to the doctor looking after your child, who will discuss them with you.

Are there any risks from x-rays?

X-rays are a source of radiation. Every day we are all exposed to natural background radiation. It comes from the earth and building materials around us, the air we breathe, the food we eat and even from outer space (cosmic rays).

As an example, if you took a one-way transatlantic flight you would receive a radiation dose which is the same as about 11 days of natural background radiation.

- Every x-ray gives you a small extra dose of radiation.
- A skeletal survey is equivalent to a few months' background radiation.
- The increased risk of cancer is very small.

Our staff make sure that every x-ray is justified and optimised, which means the benefit of the examination outweighs any potential risk. This is particularly the case with children because they are still growing. Your child will not be exposed to any unnecessary risk.

If you have any concerns about this examination, please speak to a member of staff.

MyChart

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.mychart@nhs.net. Visit www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart to find out more.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: kings.pals@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.access@nhs.net

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