

your
**OUTPATIENT
PATHWAY**

The pathway below tells you more about what happens when your child is an outpatient. Your team may first talk to you about this in your local clinic and then refer you to Bristol Children's Hospital for specialist care.



Your cardiologist may want to monitor your child's heart condition in an outpatient clinic locally to you.



You will be sent a letter with a time date and location of the appointment.



When you attend your child may be asked to undergo investigations in the appointment, or investigations might be arranged over the following few weeks. This information helps your cardiologist plan the next steps of treatment or monitoring for your child.



You will be sent a summary of the appointment by letter and the date of your next appointment.



Investigations

INVESTIGATIONS

There are a number of different investigations that your child may be asked to undergo. These include: ECG, echo, CT, MRI.

An ECG (electrocardiogram) test looks at your heart's rhythm and electrical activity. A cardiac physiologist will place sticky sensors, called electrodes, onto your chest, arms and legs. These sensors are linked by wires to an ECG recording machine. The sensors can detect the electrical signals your heart produces each time it beats and the machine will record these electrical signals to see if they are unusual. You might not be able to see your recordings immediately as they will need to be looked at by a specialist doctor. This test only lasts a few minutes.

An echo (echocardiogram) scan looks at your heart and blood vessels. It's a type of ultrasound scan which creates a moving image of your heart. A cardiac physiologist or cardiologist will place sticky sensors, called electrodes, on your chest. These sensors are linked by wires to a machine that monitors your heart's rhythm. The cardiologist will then place jelly on your chest followed by a probe which will create the moving picture of your heart. This test can take between 15-60 minutes.

An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan uses strong radio waves and magnetic fields to create a detailed image of your heart and blood vessels. An MRI scanner is a large tube that has powerful magnets. Not everyone has to have an MRI scan. However, if you do you will lie on a flat bed that's moved head first into the scanner. The scanner is operated by a radiographer in another room. They will be able to see you through a TV monitor and you can speak to them throughout the scan using the intercom. The scanner

can make loud tapping noises so you will be given headphones or earplugs to wear. It's important to keep as still as possible during the scan. Some small children are put to sleep, anaesthetised, to make it more comfortable for them because it can be quite a long procedure – up to an hour.

A CT (computerised tomography) scan (or CAT scan) is comprised of X-rays and a computer to produce detailed images of your heart and blood vessels. Radiographers will carry out the scan. Before the scan they may place a drip in your arm to give contrast material by injection so that they can see some parts of the heart or blood vessels more clearly. CT scans are usually performed when you are awake but lying down, sometimes we might wrap up a baby and feed them to keep them settled and sometimes we might give a light sedative to make it more tolerable for children. During the scan it's important to breathe normally and stay still. You can speak to the radiographer in the other room through an intercom, and they may ask you to breathe in and out or hold your breath. The scan can last between 10-20 minutes.

A 6-minute walk test is a simple procedure performed to give the doctor accurate information about the blood oxygen levels during exercise and to see how far you can walk in that time. Before the test begins the nurse will explain the test to you in detail and will answer any questions while resting. A probe will be put on your fingers. This will provide us with information about the blood oxygen levels. You will be asked to walk as far as possible for 6 minutes. The test will take approximately half an hour to complete. The length of the test may vary slightly depending on the oxygen levels during the test.