

Children's Health

Facts About CT Scans

(NAPSA)—Common childhood accidents often mean a trip to the emergency room, where doctors increasingly rely on CT scans—commonly known as CAT scans—to diagnose injuries. Because CT scanners use X-ray radiation, it is important to use the correct amount. The best way to do that is to adjust each scan for each patient's size. Some facilities have used adult settings on children, which results in a higher dose to the patient than is necessary for good images. Thanks to increased awareness, doctors are now seeking ways to determine appropriate dose levels for children.

To help, the National Cancer Institute and the Society for Pediatric Imaging created guidelines for imaging children with CT scanners.

“New research has demonstrated that cutting radiation doses by specified amounts to image children still results in accurate, high-quality images,” says Dr. Thomas Slovis, chief of pediatric imaging, Children's Hospital of Michigan, and co-author of the guidelines. “CT scans are an incredibly valuable medical tool that allows doctors to quickly diagnose injury or illness. Parents, doctors, radiologists and the makers of CT scanners must work together to ensure that CT scans are used appropriately in children, and that dosages are always adjusted to account for their smaller size.”

The new guidelines are expected to enhance the trend toward radiation-reducing CT systems. One sys-



Treating childhood injuries can be safer when diagnostic equipment is adjusted for the youngster's size.

tem developed by Philips, a pioneer in medical innovation, has standardized child settings and lets hospitals adjust radiation levels according to weight and age.

To be sure your child gets an appropriate test, Dr. Slovis has three tips:

1. Ask questions: Is CT the best test for the injury? Who will perform the scan? Technicians conduct the scan but a radiologist should supervise.

2. Request radiation doses be adjusted for your child's weight and age. If you can, go to a children's hospital where scanners are less likely to be left at adult settings.

3. Find out if the hospital has adopted child-dosing protocols. Many facilities have adopted written procedures giving technicians radiation-level standards for children based on weight and age.

These hints can help your youngsters get through childhood in good health.