

What is a Computed Tomography (CT) Scan?



Patient and Family Education

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What is a Computed Tomography (CT) Scan?

It is a type of scan that uses x-rays to obtain detailed pictures of your body in 'slice sections.' These pictures are examined by a radiologist and can help to diagnose any problems. The CT scanner is an open ring-like structure which resembles a giant doughnut.

What Happens during the Scan?

- In the scan room the technologist will explain how the CT examination works and will tell you what you can expect. You can ask any questions you may have.
- You may be asked to hold your breath while the scan is in process.
- The scanner is not noisy and the procedure should not be painful; the technologist will be able to see and hear you at all time.
- Prior to having the scan, some patients will require an injection 'contrast'.
- The scan usually takes up to 15 minutes.
- * Female patients who are, or might be pregnant, must inform the radiographer before the scan.

What is Contrast?

It is an x-ray dye inserted in the arm to highlight blood vessels and body organs more clearly. You may experience a metallic taste in your mouth and a warm sensation throughout your body.

What Happens at the Hospital Before the Exam?

- For some examinations of the abdomen and pelvis, patients may need to drink an oral contrast 45 mins to 2 hours before the scan.
- Patients will be asked general health questions before the injection regarding allergies and if they are diabetic. A blood test will be done to check creatinine results.
- All injection procedure patient need to be fasting 6 -4 hours

What will happen after the Exam?

After the exam, patients will be advised to drink fluids to drain the contrast from their body. For outpatient scans, the result will be ready within five working days. Inpatient scans are reported on the same day.

What Clothing Shall I Wear?

You may be asked to change into a hospital gown. If you wish to wear loose fitting clothing which does not have metal zippers or metal buttons, it may be possible to perform the scan without you having to change your clothing.

Can I Take my Prescribed Medicines as Usual?

Unless specifically instructed otherwise, you can continue to take prescribed medications.

Can I bring a Relative or Friend?

Yes, but for safety reasons they will not be able to accompany you during the scan, unless very special circumstances apply.