

CT SCAN

What is a CT?

A CT (Computed Tomography) scan is a non-invasive procedure that uses a combination of x-ray and sophisticated computer programs to produce multiple images of the body. As the examination table moves through the scanner, the x-ray beam follows a spiral path, producing cross-sectional images like slices of bread. When these slices are reassembled by the computer, the result is a comprehensive multidimensional view of the body.

We use a multislice scanner that obtains multiple slices in a single rotation which means we can scan thin, more detailed images very quickly.

CT scans of internal organs, bone, soft tissue and blood vessels provide clearer images and reveal more features than regular x-ray exams. Occasionally, contrast media is used to further clarify the images and scans may be taken before and after the contrast is administered.

Is there any preparation required?

- Any previous studies and reports should be brought with you.
- You must let the radiographer know if there is any chance you may be pregnant.

Depending on the area to be examined, there may be different preparations required before you come in for your exam. These will be discussed with you when you make your appointment.

CT of the abdomen or pelvis:

No food for 4 hours before your appointment. You may drink water during this time.

CT of the neck, chest or brain:

No food for 2 hours before your appointment. You may drink water during this time.

Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing to your exam. You may be given a gown to wear during the procedure.

Metal objects such as jewellery and eyeglasses may affect the CT images and depending on the area being scanned, you may be asked to remove them. For the same reason, you may also be asked to remove hearing aids and removable dental work.

Let us know of any illnesses or medical conditions you have – such as diabetes, what medications you are taking and if you have any allergies. It is important you advise us if you have a known allergy to contrast. You will be asked to fill in a consent form if contrast is required for your exam.

What will happen during the CT scan?

The CT scanner is a large, doughnut-shaped machine. The radiographer will place you on an examination table that slides through the opening in the centre. Pillows or other supports may be used to keep you in the correct position. If contrast media is required you will be given it orally and/or by intravenous injection.

You will make one quick pass through the scanner so the proper starting position can be obtained, then the examination table will move through more slowly as the scan starts. The radiographer will be in an adjacent room, but will be able to see, hear and speak with you at all times. You may be asked to hold your breath for a short period.

How long will it take?

The examination usually takes between 15 and 30 minutes.

Are there any risks?

There is always a slight risk from exposure to radiation, however the value of an accurate diagnosis outweighs the minimal risk.

Serious allergic reaction to contrast media is extremely rare, and we are well-equipped to deal with it in the unlikely event this occurs. This risk will be discussed with you prior to the exam.

Are there any side or after effects?

The scanning itself causes no pain, but if you require contrast by injection there may be some slight discomfort. You will feel a pin prick and may feel warm or flushed during the injection and get a metallic taste in your mouth. This only lasts for a few minutes. Occasionally a patient may get itching or feel nausea, which can be relieved with medication. The radiographer will be attending to you at all times to discuss these or any other symptoms.

If the contrast media is swallowed, you may find the taste mildly unpleasant but this sensation won't last long.

When will I get the results?

A radiologist will analyse the images, and your films and signed report will usually be ready within 40 – 60 minutes to take to your referring physician who will discuss the results with you. We will maintain digital records of your exam in our archive system to access it in future if required.