

What is a CT Scan

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What is a CT Scan?

A Computed Tomography Scan (also known as a CT scan or “CAT” scan) uses x-rays and a sophisticated computer to create detailed images of the structures inside your body to assist your doctor in making a diagnosis. In many cases, a contrast dye may also be used to improve the quality of the images.



Source: www.X-Plain.com

How do I prepare for my CT scan?

- You may be asked not to eat solid foods for 4 hours prior to the procedure. You may be allowed clear liquids during this time period according to what your doctor has ordered.
- In many instances, it is necessary for patients to drink oral contrast prior to CT scans of the abdomen and pelvis. This contrast outlines organs in the gastrointestinal system such as the stomach and intestine and thereby improves the images.
- Inform your doctor and the CT technologist ahead of time if you have had previous allergic reactions to contrast dye. Fortunately with the safety of the newest contrast material, adverse effects are rare.
- Because x-rays are used during this test, it is important to let your doctor know if there is any possibility that you may be pregnant.

How is the CT Scan performed?

- You will be asked to lie down on the scanning table. The table will then move into the opening of the scanner.
- The scanning table will move periodically as the pictures are taken. It is important to lie still during the scan to make the images as clear as possible.
- The exam may take anywhere from a few minutes to approximately half an hour depending upon how much of the body your doctor has ordered to be scanned.

What will I experience during the scan?

The scan itself is painless. You will hear a loud whirring sound during the scan. If your doctor has ordered contrast dye to be used, you will have an intravenous placed in your arm in order to inject the contrast into your body. While many people experience nothing when the contrast is injected, some people experience nausea, flushing, a warm sensation, or a headache from the contrast dye. If you experience itching or shortness of breath after the contrast is injected, this could indicate an allergic reaction and it is important to tell the technician right away.

Is a CT scan safe?

CT scanners use x-rays to create images. The amount of radiation used is kept to the absolute minimum necessary.

For female patients, **if there is any possibility you may be pregnant or if you are breast feeding, it is important to tell this to the technologist before the CT scan.**

Speak with the technologist if you have questions or concerns regarding the CT scan. A formal report will be sent to your doctor within days following your procedure. Your doctor will speak with you regarding the results.

Reference: Greenwich Hospital Diagnostic Imaging Department

The Patient Education Institute, Inc. (2001). Retrieved 10/04 from www.X-Plain.com

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