

CT Patient Information

Your doctor has requested a CT scan. Here are some answers to some frequently asked questions.

What is a CT scan?

CT stands for computed tomography. This technique uses X-rays to make cross-sectional images of the body. A CT image is typically thought of as a slice of the body and allows the radiologist to look inside the body. CT scans may image any part of the body.

What happens when someone has a CT scan?

The patient lies on an X-ray table that slides into the CT scanner, which looks like a large ring. The X-rays are emitted from the ring and pass through the part of the body being scanned. A computer detects the amount of radiation passing through the body and forms an image of the part of the body being scanned.

Are there special instructions to be followed before a CT scan?

Yes. For scans of the head, neck, chest, abdomen and pelvis, an intravenous injection of iodine dye (contrast agent) is often required. This is best given when the stomach is empty of food, so fasting for at least 3 hours is usually required.

For scans of the abdomen and pelvis, a drink of similar dye is required to outline the stomach and intestines. You will be given instructions at the time of making the appointment. You can continue to take your medications with a small amount of water.

Is a CT scan uncomfortable or painful?

It is not painful. Sometimes, a patient has to be placed in an uncomfortable position. If you find a particular position too uncomfortable, please inform the radiographer performing the examination.

Some patients find the examination claustrophobic. It may help to see the CT room in advance. If you would like to do so, please ask our staff at reception.

How long does a CT scan take?

The scan usually takes no more than half an hour to perform. However, you may need to arrive in the X-ray department up to 1 hour before the examination if you are required to drink contrast for the scan. Patients are asked to wait for their films and the results will be forwarded to your referring doctor as soon as they become available. In most cases, the scans are reported by the radiologist and will be available to the referring doctor within the same day of the examination.

Please bring any earlier X-rays with you when you attend for your examination.

This examination uses X-rays therefore you will need to inform the radiographer performing the exam if you are pregnant or there is a possibility that you may be pregnant.