

Radiology Department

Information for patients having a CT scan



The radiology department has received a request for you to have a CT scan. This leaflet tells you what to expect.

- If you weigh more than 177kg or 28 stone please let us know.
- If you are eligible for hospital transport please tell us as soon as possible.

What is a CT (Computed Tomography) scan?

It is a type of scan that uses X-rays to obtain detailed pictures of your body in 'slice sections' (cross sections). These pictures are examined by a radiologist (a doctor who specializes in reading X-ray images) and will help us to diagnose if there are any problems. The CT scanner is an open ring-like structure which resembles a giant doughnut – rather than a tunnel as everybody expects!

Can I bring a relative or friend?

Yes, but for reasons of safety they will not be able to accompany you into the CT scan room except in very special circumstances.

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 zips, buttons or bra clips it may be possible to perform the scan without you having to change your clothes.

Can I take my prescribed medicines as usual?

Yes, you can take all your usual medicines.

What happens at the hospital before the examination?

When you arrive in the department you will be greeted by the reception staff and radiology assistants.

For some examinations of the abdomen and pelvis you may need to drink a special liquid 30 minutes-1 hour before the scan. This highlights the bowel (gut) on the X-ray pictures.

Occasionally, for some abdominal and pelvic CT scans, we will need to administer a special liquid called contrast via the rectum. This is done in the CT scan room and it should be a quick and painless part of the procedure.

What happens during the scan?

In the scan room the radiographers will explain the CT examination to you and what to expect. You can ask any questions you may have.

You will be asked to lie on your back or your front on the scanning table. The scanning table moves your body through the scanner so that the relevant areas can be scanned. You may be asked to hold your breath while the scanner takes the pictures. We understand that some people have difficulty holding their breath – please tell us at the time if this is a problem for you.

The scanner is not noisy and the procedure should not be painful. The radiographer who performs the scan and the radiology assistants can see and hear you at all times via a connecting window and an intercom.

Will I need an injection?

Some patients need an injection of X-ray dye (we call it 'contrast') into a vein in the arm. This dye highlights the blood vessels and body organs more clearly on the X-ray images. Sometimes the cannula or 'tube' through which the contrast is

injected is put into a vein in your arm in the preparation area before you go into the scan room.

If you need to have an injection we will ask you about any medical history of diabetes, asthma or kidney problems.

We will also tell you what to expect during the injection of contrast (generally a metallic taste in the mouth and a warm sensation throughout the body which lasts for about 30 seconds). Please tell us if you experience any discomfort in the arm during the scan.

How long does the scan take?

The scan usually lasts up to fifteen minutes. You could be in the department longer if we need to see emergency patients. We will do our best to keep you informed of any delays.

Are there any risks?

The examination involves exposure to X-rays but the amount of radiation is kept to a minimum by sophisticated radiation dose controls on the scanner. We are all exposed to background radiation from the ground, building materials and the air every day of our lives. This is normal and natural. Medical X-rays give an additional dose and the level of dose varies with each examination. Any small increased risk of cancer occurring many years or decades later is outweighed by the benefit of having the scan performed so a diagnosis can be made and any necessary treatment planned.

The contrast injection contains iodine, which can cause an allergic reaction in a few people. You should tell the radiographers if you have had an allergic reaction to iodine or contrast dye in the past or if you have any other allergies.

Very rarely the dye may cause some kidney damage in people that already have kidney problems.

Rarely for those who have an injection, the contrast can leak outside the vein and cause temporary swelling and discomfort in the arm. This is unlikely to happen but if it does we will give you further instructions and advice.

What happens after the examination?

You can go home soon after the procedure. There is no reason why you cannot drive home afterwards and resume normal activities. You can eat and drink normally.

If you have an injection of contrast you may be advised to slightly increase your fluid intake for the rest of the day. If you are a diabetic taking Metformin we will speak to you about the possible need to stop taking Metformin for 48 hours after the scan.

You may remove the gauze dressing from your arm after one hour or so.

When and how will I know the result of the CT examination?

The images will be reported by a radiologist, so you will not receive the results straightaway. As a general guide:

- If your GP referred you to us the report will be sent to the GP practice and you can make an appointment for 10 days later.
- If a hospital consultant or doctor from the outpatient department referred you the report will be ready for your next outpatient appointment. If you do not have another outpatient appointment and you do not hear anything about the results within three weeks, we suggest you telephone the referring doctor's secretary for advice.

If you have any queries we will be happy to answer questions on the day of the appointment or you can telephone us on the number given on your appointment letter.

Further information

More patient information is available on the following websites:

www.impactscan.org/patientguide.htm

www.rcr.ac.uk or www.goingfora.com

www.ouh.nhs.uk

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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