

What to expect from a CT scan

The information listed below is only a guide; you will be advised of specific details when making your appointment.

A CT (computed tomography) scanner uses computer processing and X-rays to produce detailed cross-sectional images of your body, including three-dimensional pictures. Unlike standard X-rays, CT can show not only bones but also soft tissue anatomy, blood vessels, and air - all in very fine detail.

A radiologist interprets these images. A report will be generated from your scan and sent to your doctor, who will follow up with the results.

Your doctor can advise whether a CT scan may be useful in evaluating your condition.

The health risk from exposure to X-rays is generally outweighed by the vast health benefit achieved by getting a precise diagnosis.

Prior to your appointment

When you make an appointment for your scan, you will be advised whether you require any specific preparation, and we will go through the process with you then.

As a general guide, you will be advised not to eat anything two hours prior to your appointment if you are required to have a contrast. Contrast is a colourless fluid that is injected at the time of your scan to improve the definition of the images.

For abdominal examinations, you may also be required to drink water before your scan.

During

All patients will be asked to present 30 minutes prior to their appointment time.

Depending on the type of scan you are having, your appointment may take 15 to 90 minutes to complete. You may be required to complete a questionnaire.

The radiographer will guide you through the whole process. Wear loose, comfortable, warm clothing and socks to your appointment. Please avoid wearing clothes with zippers, buttons or items with metal fasteners or accessories. You may be asked to change into a hospital gown prior to your scan. You may be asked to remove metal objects, such as hearing aides, earrings, watches, hairclips and other jewellery from your person as these items can cause artefacts on the images.

The CT radiographer, trained in the use of x-ray equipment and CT scanning, will position you on the bed and take care of you throughout the scan. The radiographer will need to leave the scan room briefly whilst the scan is in progress but will remain in contact with you via an intercom and a viewing window.

It is important that you remain still during the scan. If you have difficulty lying flat or have poorly controlled pain, please discuss this with us prior to your scan.

If you need to have contrast for your scan, this is given through a small needle placed in your vein. The injection of contrast may give you a brief sensation of warmth throughout the body and maybe a metallic taste in your mouth. These sensations are expected and normal and are of no cause for concern.

After

After the examination, you can resume normal activities. Your scan report will be sent to your doctor as soon as possible.

If you have any questions regarding your CT appointment, please do not hesitate to call us on 0800 001 185. We look forward to seeing you.