

Patient guide to CT (computed tomography)



Some common questions about your CT scan

What is CT?

CT stands for computed tomography.

It is an advanced imaging technology which uses many x-rays taken from different angles of a part of the body.

These images are combined by a computer to produce cross-sections of internal organs and 3D images.

Our centres also have specialist equipment for cardiac CT, including calcium scoring, CT fluoroscopy, angiographic CT, virtual colonoscopy and all routine orthopaedic, respiratory, oncology, vascular and neurological scans.

Is CT safe?

Because CT involves x-rays, radiation exposure is a risk. However, the scanner has been designed to the highest standards of radiation safety and we always use the lowest amount of radiation to take the images.

The benefits of having the CT scan greatly outweigh the minimal health risks. These benefits include high accuracy and earlier detection of even the smallest abnormalities.

Your doctor has chosen this scan for you having fully considered the relative risks and benefits.

CT scans should not be done on pregnant women, so it is important that you tell us if you are or may be pregnant.

How do I prepare for my scan?

On the day of your appointment you will need to arrive about 15 minutes before your appointment time.

Depending on the type of scan you will be having, there are certain things you have to do to prepare for it. For scans of the abdomen and pelvis you must not eat for three hours before your appointment but you can drink as normal.

If at any time you have questions, please call the centre where you will be having the CT scan.

What can I expect?

We will give you a gown to wear during the scan and ask you to remove any loose metal objects, credit cards and watches. We will give you a locker.

In the CT suite, the radiographer will position you on the table of the CT scanner and ask you to relax and lie as still as possible. The table will slide into a large doughnut-shaped ring (not a tunnel).

The radiographer will be able to see, hear and speak to you at all times through an intercom and

viewing window and will give you simple directions during the scan.

How long will it take?

The scan will usually last between 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the type of scan. For more complicated scans, for example cardiac or colonoscopy scans, it can take up to 45 minutes.

Will I need an injection?

Depending on which part of your body is being scanned, we may inject a 'contrast' containing iodine. This will help the blood vessels, organs, and any abnormalities stand out.

During the injection you may experience a warm flush, a metallic taste in the back of your mouth and sometimes the feeling of passing urine.

While it is rare to have an allergic reaction to a contrast injection, you must fill in your questionnaire accurately so we know about any allergies you have.

Please check your skin where we injected you for signs of infection, for example redness, soreness and weeping, over the next 24 hours.

If there are signs of any of these, please contact the centre you were seen at immediately for advice or contact your GP.

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What happens after my scan?

After the scan you can eat and drink as usual and return to your daily routine straightaway.

If you have had an injection we will ask you to stay in the department for a further 20 minutes after your scan to make sure that you are fully well before leaving. We also advise you to drink plenty of fluids to help flush the contrast out of your system.

How do I get my results?

After your scan, our radiographer will give you a CD to take away, containing your images. (We do not usually issue CDs for non-private patients, unless the doctor or consultant who referred you has asked us to.)

A radiologist will write a report and send it to the doctor or consultant who referred you, usually within 48 hours.

You will need to arrange an appointment to discuss your report with the doctor or consultant who referred you for the scan.

Your report will contain a summary of the radiologist's findings and their recommendations for further follow-up.

Any other questions?

If you have any other questions, worries or doubts do not hesitate to ask one of our staff.

We want you to feel as comfortable as possible.

We are committed to providing clean, safe premises for our clients in line with the Health and Social Care Act 2008 - Code of Practice on the Prevention and Control of Infections and related guidance (December 2010) and all other Department of Health guidance.

For more information about the diagnostic centre that you will be visiting, including contact details and directions on how to get there, please visit our website at www.umediagnostics.com.