

Information for patients C.T. Scans



Imaging

Introduction

The clinician in charge of your care has requested that you have a CT scan to help with your diagnosis. A CT scan, or Computed Tomography scan, uses x-rays and a computer to obtain detailed images of inside the body.

What is the procedure?

X-rays are a type of radiation that pass through the human body. As they pass through, some of x-rays are absorbed. Dense parts of your body, such as bone, are difficult for the x-rays to pass through, and will show up on the image.

A Radiographer is a trained healthcare professional who will carry out your CT examination and explain the procedure. You will usually be asked to lie down onto a narrow bed that passes through the CT scanner. It is important that you remain still and follow any breathing instructions to ensure the images aren't blurred.

The CT scan will usually take 10 to 20 minutes; however, sometimes we need to obtain delayed images so be prepared to be with us longer.

Depending on the examination you may need an injection of a contrast agent, a special dye that demonstrates areas that are difficult to see on a CT scan. The Radiographer will explain this and ask you questions to ensure it is safe to have the contrast agent. A cannula (a small tube placed into a vein) is used to give the contrast agent, when this is administered patients can experience a warm flush around their body and a warm sensation in their bladder. This is very normal. Following the injection, we ask you to stay for 15-30 minutes to ensure that you do not have an allergic reaction to the contrast agent.

How do I prepare for the procedure?

You will not usually need to prepare for your CT scan, you can eat and drink as normal and take your normal medications.

If you are pregnant, please let us know, as CT scans are not usually recommended unless it is an emergency.

You may be asked to get undressed into a hospital gown. Try to avoid wearing jewellery and anything in your pockets as this may show up on the images and make interpretation more difficult. Please leave valuables at home. **If you have any additional needs we should know about prior to your appointment please contact us.**

For CT scans of the abdomen, we may ask you to drink either water or a diluted contrast agent before the scan. Your appointment letter will inform you of this and we ask you to attend earlier to give you time to drink the fluid we provide. **Contact us if you have any allergies or kidney problems as special arrangements may need to be made.**

What are the benefits of the procedure?

CT scans can produce detailed images of structures within the body that can be difficult to see on other imaging examinations.

CT scans can be used to help detect a range of conditions, monitor known conditions and in planning for any treatment or surgery. Your referring clinician will have explained the benefits of the examination to you.

What are the risks of the procedure?

Being exposed to x-rays carries a slight risk of causing cancer many years after exposure. We are all at risk of developing cancer from natural background radiation. A CT scan is equivalent to between a few months and a few years of exposure of natural background radiation.

Your CT examination will only add slightly to this overall lifetime risk. The benefit from the examination in helping with your diagnosis will outweigh this extra risk. More detailed information is available on request, please ask the Radiographer.

If you need a contrast injection, as with any drug or medication, there is a risk of an allergic reaction. We take precautions to minimise this and ask that you stay with us in the hospital following the injection; if you were to have an allergic reaction we would provide immediate treatment.

What happens after the procedure?

Your images will be reported by a Consultant Radiologist, a doctor specialising in the interpretation of medical images. A copy of this report will be sent to your referring clinician and the Radiographer will advise you on how long this may take.

If your GP sent you for the CT scan, we advise you to ring the surgery to check the results have arrived before making an appointment. If you were sent from a hospital clinic, the referring clinician should send an appointment to discuss the results.

If you are unsure who referred you, please ask the Radiographer.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you need to cancel or rearrange your appointment please contact the x-ray booking team on: **01691 404159**

Further information

If you would like to know more, you might find the following websites useful:

www.iaea.org/resources/rpop/patients-and-public/x-rays

www.gov.uk/government/publications/medical-radiation-patient-doses/patient-dose-information-guidance

www.nhs.uk/conditions/allergies

If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print. Arrangements can also be made on request for it to be explained in your preferred language. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

Feedback

Tell us what you think of our patient information leaflet. Please send your comments to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

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