

What is CT?

Computed Tomography, commonly called CT or CAT scan, is a diagnostic procedure that uses specialized x-ray equipment to obtain cross-sectional pictures of the body. The machine rotates continuously around the body in a spiral path. The CT computer then displays these pictures as detailed images of organs, bones, and other tissues. Three-dimensional images can also be obtained with the images.

It is easiest to understand if you can imagine your body like a loaf of bread. Each set of images obtained through your body represents a slice of bread. The computer then takes those slices and can change them into various types of images that your physician can use for evaluation and diagnosis.

How CT is Performed?

You will be asked to lie on your back on the CT table. The table moves through a large hole in the middle of the machine.

It will be important to remain still while the pictures are being taken. You will also be asked to hold your breath at various times throughout the exam preventing the blurring of your images.

Depending on the type of exam you are having, the test can last from a few minutes up to 45 minutes.

The x-rays are painless. You may have some discomfort if it is difficult for you to lie on your back for extended periods of time.

Preparation for Your Exam

If possible, you should wear loose, comfortable clothing. You will be asked to remove any articles of clothing or jewelry that have metal on them and may need to wear a hospital gown for the exam.

Depending on the type of exam you are scheduled for you may have specific instructions regarding holding food and or fluids as well as contrast that you may need to drink. Exam specific instructions will be provided to you.

Two types of contrast may be used for your exam. One is oral and the other is administered intravenously (through an IV).

Oral contrast is a barium-based contrast that you drink prior to your exam. It will be excreted from your body with your stool. IV contrast will be given through a catheter that is placed in a vein in your hand or arm. This contrast will pass unnoticed with your urine. The IV contrast can cause a warm flushing feeling. It is also common to have a metallic taste in your mouth.

These symptoms should only last for a couple of minutes. If you should experience any other symptoms, please let the technologist know.

It is very important that you notify the staff if you have a known allergy to iodinated contrast media. It is also important that we are aware of any oral diabetic medications you are on.

Renal Calculus Survey

This scan is done when kidney or ureteral stones are suspected. Pictures will be taken from your kidneys to your bladder. The exam takes from 5-10 minutes. No contrast or pre-exam preparation is required for this exam.

CT Urogram

A CT Urogram is done to examine the kidneys, ureters, and bladder. IV contrast is used to look at the function of your urinary tract. An IV will be placed into a vein in your hand or arm.

Various sets of pictures are then taken both without and with the contrast. This scan takes about 30 minutes.

A set of specific instruction regarding the pre-exam preparation for this exam will be given to you.

Following the exam there are no restrictions to your activity. We will ask you to drink plenty of fluids the next couple of days. This will help to clear the contrast from your system.

Our office will contact you with the results of your exam. Please call our office if you have not been notified of your results within a week of your test.

CT of the Abdomen and Pelvis

This exam is to look at the abdominal and pelvic anatomy. In most cases you will be asked to drink oral contrast as well as have the IV contrast given.

The contrast is used to distinguish the bowel from other anatomy, as well as, looking at the function of some organs.

Various sets of pictures will be taken both without and with the contrast. This exam takes about 20-30 minutes.

A set of specific instructions regarding pre-exam preparation for this exam will be given to you.

Following the exam there are no restrictions to your activity. We will ask you to drink plenty of fluids the next couple of days. This will help to clear the contrast from your system.

Our office will contact you with the results of your exam. Please call our office if you have not been notified of your results within a week of your test.

We hope that this information was helpful to you. Please call our office if you have any questions or concerns regarding your CT and we will be happy to answer those for you.

Some of the above information was obtained from the National Cancer Institute web site. This can be found at www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Detection/CT