

Having a CT scan

Information for Patients



Having a CT Scan

Information for Patients

Introduction

This leaflet tells you about having a CT scan - it explains how the test is done, what to expect, and what the possible risks are.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your referring doctor or GP.

What is a CT scan?

A CT scan is a non-invasive way of looking inside your body to help diagnose medical conditions and guide treatment. A CT (computed tomography) scanner uses special x-ray equipment and computers to produce images of multiple “slices” of the part of the body being scanned. These images of the inside of the body can then be examined on a computer monitor.

CT Scans provide much greater detail of internal organs, bone, blood vessels and soft tissue than ordinary x-rays so they are often the preferred method of diagnosing a wide range of medical conditions.

How does it work?

The CT scanner consists of a ‘doughnut-shaped’ structure with a hole in the centre. You will lie on a narrow examination table that slides into and out of this tunnel. X-rays produced by the scanner pass through your body and are detected by electronic sensors on the other side of the ring. This information is sent to a computer that produces a picture of the internal structure of the body. Modern CT scanners are so fast that they can scan through large sections of the body in just a few seconds.

The scanner is operated by a Radiographer, who is a professional trained to carry out X-rays and other imaging procedures. The pictures are displayed on a computer workstation for examination by the Radiologist, who is a doctor specially trained to interpret the images and carry out more complex imaging examinations.

Some scans need to be performed with an injection of special contrast (dye) which is used to enhance visibility of the area being scanned, particularly the blood vessels and blood flow to organs.

Are there any risks?

CT scanning involves the use of X-rays. There are strict guidelines in place for the use of x-rays in diagnosing medical conditions so CT scans can only be performed at the request of a Doctor. The amount of radiation used is more than an ordinary X-ray of the chest or body and is equal to the natural radiation that we receive from the atmosphere over a period of approximately three years. People who are or might be pregnant must inform a member of staff in advance. We will keep the radiation dose as low as we possibly can.

Many CT examinations involve you having a contrast medium (dye) injected into a vein to increase the quality of information obtained from the scan. The injection usually causes nothing more than a warm feeling passing around your body, a metallic taste in your mouth and occasionally a sensation of needing to urinate. These effects subside within a few minutes. The risk of serious allergic reaction to contrast materials that contain iodine is extremely rare, and radiology departments are well equipped to deal with them.

What do I need to do to prepare for my scan?

Taking tablets and medicines

You should continue to take all your usual medication as normal.

Pregnancy

Patients are asked to contact the Radiology department if there is a possibility of being pregnant. This test uses radiation and there is a risk to the unborn baby if carried out whilst pregnant.

Allergy to intravenous contrast medium

You should inform us in advance if you have a known allergy to intravenous contrast material (dye).

Preparation

We may ask you to drink water before the scan.

Reasonable Adjustments

If you need to reschedule or require any reasonable adjustments to support your appointment, please let us know in advance

What happens after the scan?

If you have had an injection of contrast into a vein you will need to stay in the department for 20 minutes after your scan. A radiographer or helper will then take the cannula out. You may eat and drink as normal as soon as the examination is finished.

A Radiologist will review the images from your CT scan and send a report to your doctor. Your GP or hospital Consultant who referred you for the test will see you to discuss the results.

Any questions?

We will do our best to make your visit as comfortable and stress free as possible. If you have any questions, please contact our admin team on 01761 422250 or email us at radiology@sulishospital.com