

CT SCAN

Computed Tomography (CT Scan) is a medical imaging technique combining x-ray imaging with computer technology to produce cross-sectional images of the human body. CT scans can create detailed views of the body's soft tissues, including blood vessels, muscle tissue and organs which can provide valuable diagnostic information.

What to expect during an exam

Upon entering the exam room you will see the CT scanner, a large circular machine with a table extending from an opening in the center. A highly trained technologist will help you get situated on the table, explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have. The technologist will monitor the exam from a control room.

During the exam you will be able to communicate with the technologist using a two-way intercom. As the exam begins, the table will gently slide into the scanner's opening. Throughout the exam you might hear the scanner rotating and the table might move slightly to allow the scanner to capture various images. You may be asked to hold your breath during certain points of the exam. This helps minimize blurring of image that can be caused by motion. In some instances, patients may be given a contrast agent either oral or via an intravenous injection to increase the density between different tissues.

Impact of a CT Scan

While CT scans are considered a safe examination, you will be exposed to x-ray radiation. The technologists are trained to use the minimum amount of radiation to produce the desired image. In the vast majority of cases, the diagnostic benefit of a CT scan greatly outweighs the risk of radiation. A CT scan is painless, noninvasive and can potentially eliminate the need for invasive exploratory surgery.

Length and preparation for exam

Depending on how many images are required, a CT exam generally takes 15 to 30 minutes. A detailed study could take longer.

In some cases you will be asked to drink a liquid contrast agent that will enhance the visibility of images captured by the CT scanner. Should your exam require other special preparations your physician will give you instructions.

It is recommended to wear loose fitting clothing without snaps or metal. You may be asked to remove belts and jewelry. You may request to wear a gown for your exam.

Women should inform their physician or the technologist if there is any potential that they are pregnant. Also nursing mothers should wait 24 hours after ingestion of the liquid contrast to resume breast-feeding.

Getting results

After your exam, a radiologist specializing in CT will analyze and interpret the images and prepare a report. The report will be sent to your physician who will share the results with you. To request a copy of the written report, please contact your physician's office.

Important reminder

Please do not bring siblings or small children to your procedure