

COMPUTERIZED TOMOGRAPHY (CT OR CAT SCAN)

Patient Education

What is the purpose of this test?

CT (Computerized Tomography) uses special x-ray equipment to obtain images from different angles around the body, then uses computer processing to show a cross section of body tissues and organs. Using these specialized images, a radiologist can more easily diagnose problems such as tumors, cysts, cardiovascular disease, trauma, infectious disease, and bone disorders. A CT examination often requires the use of different contrast agents to better visualize certain tissues or organs. The contrast agent may be injected in a vein in the arm or swallowed. CT is one of the best tools for confirming a tumor size, precise location, and involvement with other organs.



How should I prepare for this test?

Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing. Metal objects can affect the image, so avoid clothing with zippers and snaps. If you are having a head CT, you will be asked to remove jewelry from the area. If you are scheduled for a contrast CT, you will be instructed not to eat or drink four hours prior to the exam time. You should inform your physician of any food or medicine allergies you may have and any recent illness or medical condition. If you are diabetic, make sure your doctor is aware of what medications you are taking. You may take morning medications with small sips of water.

How will this test affect me?

CT is a painless procedure that does not require medication. You may have the mild discomfort of having an IV started for contrast injection. You will need to lie still while the scanner is actually acquiring images, which will only take a few minutes. Some patients report that they experience a flush of heat and a metallic taste in the back of the mouth during the injection of the contrast material. These sensations will disappear within a minute or two.

How is the test performed?

The CT nurse will take you into the CT prep area and ask you several questions regarding food and medicine allergies. You will then be taken to the exam room and placed on the CT table. The CT scanner is a large, square machine with a hole in the center, like a doughnut. The table will move during the procedure to place the body part in the correct position in the scanner. You will hear clicking and whirring noises during the procedure. The technologist will be able to see you and talk with you through an intercom during the exam. A CT exam will take approximately 15 minutes for the entire procedure.

How will I receive results of the test?

Results will be sent to your physician who will discuss the results with you.

CONTACT YOUR PHYSICIAN FOR FURTHER QUESTIONS