

Having a CT Scan

What is a CT?

A computerized tomography (CT) scan combines a series of X-ray images taken from different angles around your body and uses computer processing to create cross-sectional images (slices) of the bones, blood vessels and soft tissues inside your body. CT scan images provide more detailed information than plain X-rays do.

It is very important you tell your child what to expect. Use simple language that your child can understand. The test is easier when your child can help.

What happens during a CT?

CT scanners are shaped like a large doughnut standing on its side. You lie on a narrow, motorized table that slides through the opening into a tunnel. You may hear buzzing and whirring noises as the detectors and x-ray tube rotate around you.

Straps and pillows may be used to help you stay in position. During a head scan, the table may be fitted with a special cradle that holds your head still.

A technologist in a separate room can see and hear you. You will be able to communicate with a technologist via intercom. The technologist may ask you to hold your breath at certain points to avoid blurring the images.

CT scans are painless and, with newer machines, take only a few minutes. It is very important to lie completely still for the exam.



Preparation for CT

Depending on which part of your body is being scanned, you may be asked to:

- Take off some, or all, of your clothing and wear a hospital gown
- Remove metal objects, such as a belt, jewelry, dentures and eyeglasses, which might interfere with image results

If you are a female between the ages of 11-55 years, you will be asked if there is a chance of pregnancy.

For certain studies, a special dye (contrast media) is needed for some CT scans to help highlight the areas of your body being examined. For these studies, a letter will be sent to you instructing no food or drink for 3 hours prior to exam.

Contrast material might be given to you:

- By mouth. If your esophagus or stomach is being scanned, you may need to swallow a liquid that contains contrast material. This contrast can be mixed with water, apple juice or 7-Up to avoid it tasting unpleasant.
- By injection. Contrast agents can be injected via IV through a vein in your arm. You may experience a feeling of warmth during the injection or a metallic taste in your mouth.

If your infant or toddler is having a CT scan, the doctor may recommend a sedative to keep your child calm and still. Movement blurs the images and may lead to inaccurate results. If sedation is required, you will receive a phone call from Diagnostic Imaging staff to provide additional information.

To avoid the need for sedation and depending on the age of your child, ask your child to practice lying still and holding their breath for 10 seconds.



After the CT Scan

After the exam you can return to your normal routine. If you were given contrast material, you may receive special instructions. In some cases, you may be asked to wait for a short time before leaving to ensure that you feel well after the exam. After the scan, you'll likely be told to drink lots of fluids to help your kidneys remove the contrast material from your body.

The images are read by a Radiologist who will provide a report to the requesting physician within 5-7 days.

If you have any questions about the CT scan, please call the Children's CT Department at (204) 787-5781.



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