

CT Scan

A CT scan (*computed tomography scan*) is an imaging scan. It uses X-rays and a computer to make detailed pictures of different areas inside the body. A CT scan can give more information than a regular X-ray exam. A CT scan provides data about internal organs, soft tissue structures, blood vessels, and bones.

In this procedure, the pictures will be taken in a large machine that has an opening (*CT scanner*).

Tell a health care provider about:

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbs, eye drops, creams, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Any blood disorders you have.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Any medical conditions you have.
- Whether you are pregnant or may be pregnant.

What are the risks?

Generally, this is a safe procedure. However, problems may occur, including:

- An allergic reaction to dyes.
- Development of cancer from excessive exposure to radiation from multiple CT scans. This is rare.

What happens before the procedure?

Staying hydrated

Follow instructions from your health care provider about hydration, which may include:

- Up to 2 hours before the procedure – you may continue to drink clear liquids, such as water, clear fruit juice, black coffee, and plain tea.

Eating and drinking restrictions

Follow instructions from your health care provider about eating and drinking, which may include:

- 24 hours before the procedure – stop drinking caffeinated beverages, such as energy drinks, tea, soda, coffee, and hot chocolate.
- 8 hours before the procedure – stop eating heavy meals or foods such as meat, fried foods, or fatty foods.
- 6 hours before the procedure – stop eating light meals or foods, such as toast or cereal.
- 6 hours before the procedure – stop drinking milk or drinks that contain milk.
- 2 hours before the procedure – stop drinking clear liquids.

General instructions

- Remove any jewelry.
- Ask your health care provider about changing or stopping your regular medicines. This is especially important if you are taking diabetes medicines or blood thinners.

What happens during the procedure?

- You will lie on a table with your arms above your head.
- An IV tube may be inserted into one of your veins.
- The contrast dye may be injected into the IV tube. You may feel warm or have a metallic taste in your mouth.
- The table you will be lying on will move into the CT scanner.
- You will be able to see, hear, and talk to the person running the machine while you are in it. Follow that person's instructions.
- The CT scanner will move around you to take pictures. **Do not** move while it is scanning. Staying still helps the scanner to get a good image.
- When the best possible pictures have been taken, the machine will be turned off. The table will be moved out of the machine.
- The IV tube will be removed.



The procedure may vary among health care providers and hospitals.

What happens after the procedure?

- It is up to you to get the results of your procedure. Ask your health care provider, or the department that is doing the procedure, when your results will be ready.

Summary

- A CT scan is an imaging scan.
- A CT scan uses X-rays and a computer to make detailed pictures of different areas of your body.
- Follow instructions from your health care provider about eating and drinking before the procedure.
- You will be able to see, hear, and talk to the person running the machine while you are in it. Follow that person's instructions.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.