



Patients undergoing a CT examination

Information for patients attending the Radiology Department

What is a CT scan?

A CT (computed tomography) scan is an x-ray test that lets us look at your body more accurately than is possible using normal x-rays, by producing a cross-section or slice of the body.

CT is used for scanning most parts of the body, including the brain, chest, abdomen, pelvis, and sometimes the bones and joints.

The scanner itself looks rather like a huge 'ring doughnut' with a table moving through it. During the scan, the table moves backwards and forwards to allow the scanner to take pictures of the body.



When you arrive

Kent and Canterbury Hospital (K&C), Canterbury:

Please report to the x-ray reception desk upon arrival; this is situated in the main x-ray department. You will be given a card to take with you and directed to the CT waiting room.

William Harvey Hospital (WHH), Ashford:

Please report to the reception desk in the CT / MRI unit upon arrival. This is situated in the CT and MRI building, located behind the accident and emergency (A&E) department. You will be shown where to wait and staff in the CT department will be told you have arrived. If, after 10 minutes a member of staff has not been to see you, please tell the receptionist.

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital, Margate:

Please report to the reception desk in the medical imaging department upon arrival. This is situated off the main corridor at the Ramsgate Road entrance. You will be shown where to wait and staff in the CT department will be told you have arrived. If, after 10 minutes a member of staff has not been to see you, please tell the receptionist.

What happens before my scan?

For scans of the abdomen and pelvis you may need to arrive **before** your appointment time, unless otherwise stated in your appointment letter, so that we can prepare you for your scan.

Please do not eat for two hours before your examination although you may drink clear fluids up to your appointment time.

You must continue taking any medication as normal, unless you are asked specifically to stop.

For scans of the abdomen and pelvis, you may be asked to drink a jug of liquid beforehand; it could be water or contrast. This will outline your stomach and bowel, and it may be needed to fill your bladder, to improve the quality of the pictures.

- **For female patients of child-bearing age**

Please contact the CT department before your scan if you think there is any possibility you may be pregnant.

- **Diabetic patients**

If you are a tablet controlled diabetic, please contact the departmental x-ray nurses urgently. The contact telephone can be found at the end of this leaflet.

- **Children**

Please note that due to the nature of the examination we cannot have unaccompanied children in the department.

- **Clothing**

If possible could you please wear metal-free clothing.

What happens during my scan?

When it is time for your scan you will be taken to the examination room by a member of the CT staff.

You may need to remove some clothing and jewellery as metal can interfere with the scan.

During your scan it is **often** necessary to give you an injection of a contrast medium into a vein in your arm or hand through a cannula. This makes it easier to see your organs and blood vessels and improves the quality of the pictures. If the injection is necessary, the radiographer will ask you some questions about your general health.

It is important that you lie still during your scan. You may be asked to hold your breath to make the pictures come out more clearly. During the injection, it is common to notice a warm sensation and a metallic taste in your mouth; this is perfectly normal and will pass quickly.

During your scan, the radiographer will be able to see you at all times from the control room, and you can talk to each other through an intercom. If you are worried or have any questions, please speak to the radiographer.

How long will it take?

The scan itself will take between 10 and 15 minutes, depending on how difficult the examination is. Generally you should expect to be in the department for about one to two hours.

What will happen after my scan?

As soon as your scan is completed, you will be able to get dressed. If you have had an injection of x-ray dye, the cannula in your arm will be removed and we ask that you do not leave the hospital for one hour after the injection. This is to make sure you are feeling well before you go home. You may go to the toilet and you can eat and drink normally.

When will I get my results?

Whilst the radiographer can reassure you that the appropriate images have been obtained, they will not be able to give you any idea of the results at that time. The scans must be carefully analyzed and interpreted by a radiologist or an advanced practitioner radiographer, who will prepare a report and send it to your own doctor. Your doctor will tell you the results and discuss them with you.

Are there any risks involved?

CT scanning does involve x-rays, and so has the usual risks associated with radiation. Far more x-rays are involved in a CT scan than in an ordinary x-ray. Therefore, doctors do not ask for this examination without a good medical reason.

In very rare cases, patients may experience side effects from having the injection of the contrast medium. Staff working in the CT department are fully trained to deal with this situation if it arises.

Despite these slight risks, your doctor believes it is advisable for you to have this examination, and do bear in mind there may be greater risks from missing a serious illness by **not** having the scan.

Further information

If you need to contact us concerning your appointment please telephone radiology on 01843 234565.

Useful websites

- Royal College of Radiologists www.rcr.ac.uk

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 783145, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhft.nhs.uk/patientinformation