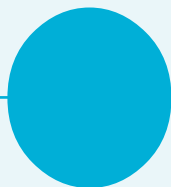


The ROYAL MARSDEN
NHS Foundation Trust

CT Scan



Patient Information



NHS



Contents

What is a CT scan?	1
Why am I having a CT scan?	1
Who can have a CT scan?	1
Are there any risks involved with having a CT scan?	1
What preparation will I need?	2
Do I need a blood test before my CT scan?	2
How long does the scan take?	4
What happens during the scan?	4
What happens afterwards?	6
When will I know the results of my scan?	6
What if I can't keep my CT appointment?	7
Where can I get help?	7

What is a CT scan?

A CT (Computerised Tomography) scan uses x-rays to produce images of the body. The images are produced from a block of data which the scanner acquires in one breath.

These are turned into cross sectional images that a radiologist can report on.

Why am I having a CT scan?

CT scans are investigations that can be used to help doctors to make a diagnosis or assess the effects of treatment. Your doctor will recommend a CT scan based on the type of disease you have and the information needed.

Who can have a CT scan?

CT scans use x-rays to produce the images and the x-ray dose for each scan is kept to a minimum for your safety. However, you should not have a CT scan if there is any possibility that you are pregnant. Please contact CT scanning before your scan, if you think you may be pregnant.

Are there any risks involved with having a CT scan?

CT scanners use x-rays at the lowest practical dose. The benefits of having a CT scan outweigh the risk of exposure to radiation, as the information obtained from the scan will contribute to your treatment.



What preparation will I need?

The preparation depends on which part of the body is to be scanned and these are covered below. You may be asked to undress and put on a hospital gown. For some scans, you may be able to wear your own clothes if they have no metal in them for example, a tracksuit or leggings and a T-shirt. You may also be asked to remove jewellery as metal can interfere with the clearness of the picture.

- For all scans, do not eat anything for two hours before your appointment time.
- **You should, however, drink 500 millilitres (about one pint) of liquid - water, squash, tea or coffee. Please do not have fizzy drinks.**
- For scans of the abdomen and/or pelvic area you may be asked to drink up to a litre of fluid before the scan. This will help to identify your stomach and bowel clearly on the scans.

Do I need a blood test before my CT scan?

During your CT scan, in order to improve image quality, you may be given intravenous contrast (a type of dye). Your kidneys naturally remove this from your body so you may need a blood test to check how well your kidneys can do this.

You will require a U and E blood test within 28 days of your appointment if:

- You have pre existing renal impairment (kidney problems)
- You are diabetic
- You are taking Metformin
- You have prostate, bladder, ureter or kidney cancer
- You have congestive heart failure
- You are 70 years old and over
- You have a kidney stent
- You have been given Nephrotoxic drugs within the last month
 - Chemotherapy – platinum, cyclosporine
 - Water tablets – diuretics
 - Antibiotic – gentamicin, vancomycin, rifampicin, sulphonamides, ciprofloxacin.

You do not require U and E blood test if:

- You have none of the above conditions
- You are allergic to IV contrast – iodine based x-ray dye
- You are having a high resolution chest scan.



How long does the scan take?

The scan itself will take between 10 – 15 minutes, depending on the number of pictures taken and the complexity of the scan.

Generally you should expect to be in the CT scanning for about 1½ – 2 hours.

Occasionally we will be asked to scan a patient urgently which may result in a short delay, but we will keep you informed should this happen.

We ask you to arrive on time for your appointment, as your delay may result in the disruption in the service to others and you may have to rebook your appointment. If you are going to be late or cannot keep your appointment, please let us know as soon as possible.

What happens during the scan?

The scanner looks like a large doughnut. You will be asked to lie on a cushioned table, which will move slowly through the scanner to allow pictures to be taken at different levels. The machine makes some noise whilst working.

During the scan, an injection of fluid (contrast medium) is often given into a vein in your arm or hand. This helps to provide clearer images. A cannula (small tube) will be put into a vein before you go into the scan room or a small needle will be inserted into a vein before the scan.



You may experience a warm or flushing sensation during the injection, an occasional metallic or tingling taste in the mouth. These side effects usually last for only a few moments.

For some scans, you may be asked to hold your breath or to stop swallowing for short periods. A member of the scanning team will give you instructions about your breathing and let you know what is happening at each stage of the scan. The staff will be able to see and hear you, so please say if you have any discomfort.

Some people may find having a CT scan a bit claustrophobic. If you are worried about this, please speak to the radiographer before you come for your scan. During the scan, the radiographer will be able to see you from the control room and you can talk to each other through an intercom.



What happens afterwards?

As soon as the scan is completed, you can get dressed. We recommend that you wait an hour after your injection to make sure that you are feeling well before you leave the department. You may go to the toilet and you can eat and drink normally. It is safe for you to drive home.

There are no side effects to having a CT scan. Very occasionally, someone will have an allergic reaction to the injection of contrast medium (this affects 1 to 10 people in 10,000). Staff working in the CT scanning are trained to manage this situation if it arises.

When will I know the results of my scan?

Although the radiographer (the person carrying out your scan) can see the images on the screen, they are not able to give you the results. The scans must be carefully analysed and interpreted by a radiologist (a doctor who specialises in x-ray imaging). The radiologist will prepare a report and send it to your own doctor. This usually takes a few days. Your doctor will tell you the results and discuss them with you.

What if I can't keep my CT appointment?

Please let us know in CT scanning as soon as possible if you cannot keep your appointment. If you are admitted to hospital before your appointment, please let the staff know on the ward that you have this appointment booked.

Please call CT scanning if you are asthmatic, diabetic or think you might be pregnant, so that staff can advise you before your scan.

Where can I get help?

The staff in CT scanning will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Please ask at the time of your appointment or telephone the department at any time.

Chelsea, London

The Royal Marsden
NHS Foundation Trust
Fulham Road
London SW3 6JJ

020 7808 2575

Sutton, Surrey

The Royal Marsden
Downs Road, Sutton
Surrey SM2 5PT

020 8661 3222



The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

You can ring the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments.

This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

Notes and questions

References

This leaflet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this leaflet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Freephone: 0800 783 7176

Email: patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk

No conflicts of interest were declared in the production of this leaflet

Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.



The patient information service is generously supported by The Royal Marsden Charity.
royalmarsden.org
Registered Charity No.1095197

Revised May 2019

Planned review May 2022

© The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust

PI-0065-08

Life demands excellence



Radiotherapy and
Chemotherapy Services
F538021 & F538022

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE

