

Patients having a CT examination

Information for patients

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.



What happens when I arrive at the hospital?

- **Buckland Hospital, Dover**

When you arrive at the hospital, please report to the main reception desk. 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.

- **Kent and Canterbury Hospital (K&C), Canterbury**

When you arrive at the hospital, please report to the x-ray reception desk; this is in the main X-ray Department. You will be given a card to take with you and directed to the CT waiting room.

- **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital, Margate**

When you arrive at the hospital, please report to the reception desk in the Medical Imaging Department; this is off the main corridor at the Ramsgate Road entrance to the hospital. 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.

- **William Harvey Hospital (WHH), Ashford**

When you arrive at the hospital, please report to the reception desk in the CT / MRI Unit; this is in the CT and MRI building, behind the Emergency 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.

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 before your scan; 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**

If you think there is a possibility you may be pregnant, please contact the CT Department before your scan.

- **Diabetic patients**

If you are a tablet controlled diabetic, please contact the Radiology Department x-ray nurses urgently. Their contact telephone number 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, 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 CT staff.
- You may need to remove some clothing and jewellery, as metal can interfere with your 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.

During the injection, it is common to notice a warm feeling and a metallic taste in your mouth; this is normal and will pass quickly.

- 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 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 my scan 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 can get dressed.
- You can go to the toilet, and eat and drink normally.
- If you have had an injection of x-ray dye, the cannula in your arm will be removed and we ask that you stay in the hospital for one hour after your injection. This is to make sure you are feeling well before you go home.

Are there any risks involved in having a CT scan?

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 have side effects from the contrast medium injection. Staff working in the CT Department are fully trained to deal with this if it happens.

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

When will I get my results?

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

Further information

If you need to contact us concerning your appointment, please telephone the Radiology Department on 01843 23 45 65.

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. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

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