

Computerized Tomography (CT) Scan

If you have any questions or concerns about the CT scan, please ask the Radiology staff.

A computed tomography (CT) scan is a special way of looking inside your body. The images produced are cross-sectional planes taken from a part of your body, much like slices taken out of a loaf of bread. The length of the exam will depend upon the area to be scanned and specific information needed by your doctors. The CT scan is done in the Radiology (X-ray) department.

Please tell your doctor or the X-ray staff if you:

- Might be pregnant, are trying to get pregnant or are breastfeeding
- Are allergic to iodine
- Are on dialysis or have known kidney disease
- Are diabetic
- Have had a problem with this exam (or other contrast exams) in the past

Preparation for the Test

If you have an iodine allergy or are taking metformin (Glucophage®, Glucophage XR®, Glucovance®), you will be given special medication instructions. It is important that you follow these instructions carefully.

For dialysis patients, the CT scan may need to be scheduled on the same day as your dialysis treatment.

Patients over the age of 70 or those having known risk factors may require kidney function tests.

Other preparations for the CT scan will vary depending on the area of the body to be examined. Your doctor will inform you of any needed preparations. These may include:

- Pregnancy testing and advice for withholding breastfeeding
- Diet restrictions
- Proper fluid intake
- Laxatives or bowel preparations

Patients will need to change into a hospital gown for this exam. Outpatients will be shown to a dressing area for changing. You will need to remove any loose or hanging jewelry, such as necklaces. It is not usually necessary to remove rings or watches, but you may choose to do so for comfort.

You may be asked to drink a liquid contrast agent called barium. This oral contrast agent outlines the stomach and bowel on the pictures and will make certain parts of your body appear bright on the pictures. This step is important in obtaining accurate results. If you experience any stomach disturbance or diarrhea, please tell the CT staff.

Another contrast agent, a dye, may be needed during the scan. This is injected through an IV (into the vein) line. This line may be started before the CT scan begins.

During the Test

Before the test begins, the X-ray staff will explain the test and the equipment used. You will be asked to lie on a table connected to the CT scan machine. The technologist (tech) will line up the part of your body to be examined, and the table will then move so that you are in the center of the machine. The tech will keep in contact with you throughout the exam by intercom.

As the exam begins, it is very important that you lie still and follow the instructions of the tech and doctor. The tech may ask you to hold your breath several times during the test.

If needed, a doctor or nurse will inject the IV contrast. As it is injected, you may feel warm and flushed or feel the urge to urinate. You may also note a metallic taste in your mouth. These are normal effects, although most people will feel nothing at all. Please tell the staff right away if you note any of the following:

- Shortness of breath
- Hives
- Itching

After the Test

You may resume your normal activities and diet after the test. If you received a contrast agent during the test, it is suggested that you drink an additional 1 or 2 glasses of water. The contrast agent will not discolor your urine. Although it is rare to experience any delayed allergic reactions, contact the CT department or your doctor if any rash or swelling occurs.

If you received an oral preparation, you may notice a change in the color and frequency of your bowel movements. If any change lasts more than 2 to 3 days, please contact your doctor.

If you have any questions or concerns about this test, please ask your doctor, nurse or Radiology staff.

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.

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Developed by: Department of Radiology

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For more information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit www.nmh.org.

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