



Having a CT scan (adult)

This leaflet gives general information about having a CT scan. You will also get a separate leaflet outlining the specific type of CT scan you are having – this will explain any preparation needed, what happens during the scan and any aftercare instructions.

CT scan under general anaesthetic

If your CT scan is to be performed under a general anaesthetic, you will need to be admitted to a ward as a day case patient. Your consultant's secretary/team will arrange for you to attend pre-op clerking in preparation for this admission.

You will need to arrive on the ward at 12 midday on the day of your scan. You should have nothing to eat or drink from 7:00am on the day of your scan.

You may contact the X-ray Department on 0118 322 7489 if you have not heard back from the consultant's secretary or the Clinical Admin Team.

What is a CT scan?

You are having a scan because a specialist hospital doctor (or, occasionally, your GP) has requested this examination based on any symptoms you are experiencing or results of imaging / tests you may have had previously.

CT stands for computerised tomography. It uses X-rays and a computer to create detailed images of the inside of your body. The CT scan generates slice pictures of the inside of your body (rather like slices in a loaf of bread). This allows the consultant radiologist to look in detail at the internal anatomy of your body when they write the formal report.

Your CT

The scan you have been referred for may be of any part of your body, from your head down to your feet. CT is ideally suited to provide whole body pictures, and can look at the internal organs, blood vessels and bony joints within the body.

Depending on what part of the body is being looked at and what the scan is looking for, will dictate the protocol used when you are scanned, which will influence what preparation you are given.

Are there any risks with this test?

You will always be asked on the day if you are allergic to iodine (the intravenous contrast), but if you know you are allergic when you receive your appointment, please contact the Radiology Department on 0118 322 7489 to notify us.

Individual risks will be outlined in a separate leaflet, depending on why you are having the CT scan and what procedures are carried out during it.

The scanner uses ionising radiation (X-rays) to produce the pictures. The scanner protocols are reviewed and optimised and the radiographers are trained to ensure the dose you receive is as low as practically possible.

What happens during the CT?

You will be given a separate leaflet outlining any specific preparation / aftercare needed and explaining exactly what happens during the scan, depending on why you are having it.

The CT scanner consists of an X-ray tube that rotates around your body. You will usually be moved continuously through the scanner as it takes the pictures. The X-rays pass through your body and hit a series of detectors opposite the tube, which then generate the pictures via a complex computer.

The scan itself is painless and will usually take a few seconds depending on the part of your body being scanned, although the whole procedure will last approximately 10-20 minutes.

The only sensation felt during the scan is from the injection we give you (if appropriate). This intravenous iodine injection is designed to show up your internal organs and vessels. As this is injected, it is normal to feel a warm flush over your body and it can make you feel like you need the toilet because it fills the bladder quickly.

After the CT scan

Once the scan has finished, you will be free to get dressed and go home. There is no associated recovery period or lasting effects from a diagnostic scan. For more complex interventional CT procedures, individual information will be provided in appointment letters or by direct communication from the department.

Results

If you are having the CT scan for diagnosis reasons then a report of your examination will usually be sent to the doctor who referred you. If this is a hospital specialist, then the specialist will contact your GP with the report.

Further information

www.nhs.uk/conditions/ct-scan/pages/introduction.aspx

Contacting us

Radiology Department Tel 0118 322 7991

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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Next review due: January 2027

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