

## Computed Tomography (CT)

CT, sometimes called CAT scan, is a special type of x-ray exam that produces cross-sectional images. CT is a relatively simple, safe and painless exam that can detect many conditions that do not show up on conventional x-ray exams.

If there is any possibility of pregnancy, this must be discussed with your physician BEFORE any tests can be done.

### How to prepare for a CT scan

You should wear comfortable clothing for your CT (sweats/work-out clothing are the most convenient). Metal objects will cause streaking in your images, so try to minimize wearing of jewelry, hairpins, and any other removable metallic objects. If you do wear these things you may be asked to remove them. All personal items will remain in the scan room with you during your procedure. You will be **required** to fill out paperwork prior to **every** scan, so please arrive at least 10 minutes early to give yourself plenty of time to do this **thoroughly**. The paperwork you fill out is very important to the physician who reads your exam and to the technologist who does your exam (in some instances it is the only information we get about your condition). Things that you should be prepared to answer include, **complaint/problem, complete surgery history, allergy history, complete list of medications you are currently taking, and medication allergies.**

Because CT utilizes radiation to obtain images the only person allowed in the scan room is the patient. The technologist who does your exam will be in and out of the scan room many times during the test. The tech will always be able to see and hear you but will not be in the scan room while it is producing radiation.

### What to expect

The CT scanner is a square machine with a large hole in the center; it looks something like a square doughnut. You will lie on a table that rises up & down and slides in and out of the large hole in the machine. Once you are on the table, if your test requires IV contrast the IV will be started, then the technologist will start the exam. If your test is of the chest, abdomen and /or pelvis the machine will be giving you breathing instructions. As with all other x-ray exams it will be important for you to hold very still during the test.

### Contrast agents

Contrast agents are used in CT to increase visibility of the organs of the body. In CT we use two different types: Intestinal and I.V.

**Intestinal:** Intestinal contrast is an agent that is used to highlight the intestinal tract (stomach, small bowel & colon). If your physician orders your test with oral contrast, you will be required to arrive prior to your exam time so that you can drink the appropriate amount of contrast at the appropriate time frames. Intestinal contrast is also given via enema, if the main focus of the test is the colon or appendix it is sometimes necessary to give contrast this way. Common intestinal contrasts are Barium & Gastrografin.

**I.V.:** I.V. contrast is an iodine based liquid that is injected into your vein during the test. This contrast will highlight several different tissues and blood vessels in the body. Utilizing I.V. contrast is extremely important in the detection of pathology/abnormalities on almost all CT exams. If you are allergic to injectable iodine make sure that your physician knows this prior to scheduling your exam.