

# COMPUTER TOMOGRAPHY (CT)

## What is CT?

Computed tomography (CT) is cross-sectional imaging method, using a beam of x-rays that rotate around you as you lay on the scanner table. These produce detailed pictures of the body to help diagnose and treat medical conditions.

## What is CT used for?

The CT images are very detailed and show bone, organs and other tissues in the body very clearly. CT can be used to investigate a wide range of conditions.

## Are there any risks?

CT scanning involves x-rays (radiation). Patients who are or may be pregnant must inform a member of staff in advance as the amount of radiation used is more than an ordinary x-ray of the chest or body. A CT examination of your Abdomen and Pelvis tends to be the equivalent of 3 years of background radiation for a person living in Ireland.

## How should I prepare for my CT examination?

Unless you are told otherwise, no special preparation is required for your scan. It is helpful if you could come for your scan in clothing with no metal parts such as hooks, buckles or zips. If this is not possible you may be asked to change into a hospital gown. You will need to remove all jewellery, piercings, drug patches, metallic denture plates and hearing aids. We would also request that you leave any valuable possessions at home. If you are taking any medication, please continue to do so unless instructed otherwise. You will be required to complete a safety questionnaire before your CT

examination. This will be sent out with the appointment letter or can be completed when you arrive at the department.

You will be required to complete a safety questionnaire before your MRI examination. This may be sent out with the appointment letter or can be completed when you arrive at the department. Please let us know if you have any mobility challenges requiring additional equipment, or other special needs or requirements when making your appointment. This will ensure that we are able to offer you the highest quality service.

## Do I need to fast for CT?

Depending on the type of CT examination, you may be asked to fast from food and/or fluid before your scan. Staff will advise you of all preparations necessary when scheduling your appointment.

## Will I need to receive contrast or dye for the CT?

Some CT examinations require you to drink or have an injection of a contrast agent (sometimes called dye). If you are required to drink contrast for your scan you will need to attend 1 – 2 hours before your examination time to drink approximately 1 litre of the contrast and staff will let you know in advance. You should inform the radiographer if you suffer from any allergies, asthma, hay fever, or if you have any problems with your heart, liver or kidneys.

## Are there any side effects?

There are no known side effects from having a CT scan, but there is a very small risk of an allergy-like reaction to the contrast agent (dye). This can range from a minor reaction such as a skin rash to a more serious asthma attack. All our staff are highly trained in dealing with reactions. The Radiographer will ask you about allergies and will warn you of what to expect.

## What happens when I arrive?

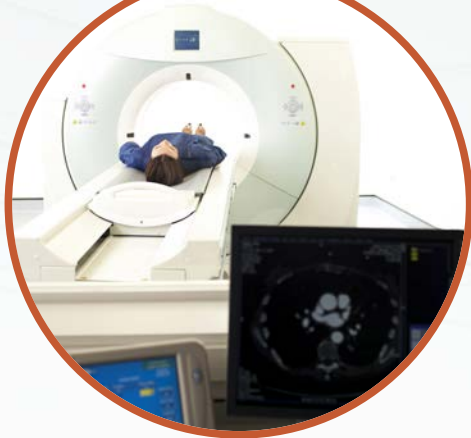
On the day of your scan, you should arrive 15-20 minutes before your appointment time.

Please note that your appointment time might be one or two hours before your examination time depending on whether you require oral contrast or not. You will check in at reception and you will be asked by the reception staff to complete a few forms. These forms might include a safety questionnaire or a claim form to process payment from your health insurance company. Please bring along your health insurance membership card if applicable. Prior to your examination you might be asked to change into a hospital gown.

The examination will be explained to you by one of our trained clinical staff and you will be given the opportunity to ask any questions. If you require an injection of contrast agent, it will be necessary for a small cannula to be inserted into a vein by one of our specially trained staff members.

## What happens during the scan?

You will be asked to lie on a table, which will be raised up and moved into a doughnut-shaped machine which is open at both ends. Straps and pillows may be used to help maintain the correct position for the scan and aid your comfort. Our staff will leave the room during the scan but can see and hear you at all times. They will communicate with you by means of an intercom. You may be asked to hold your breath at certain stages during the scan.



## How long will my scan take?

The scan takes approximately 5-20 minutes but may be longer for certain examinations. The overall examination time can vary depending on whether you require contrast or not.

## What happens after the scan?

You will be removed from the scanner and allowed to dress and retrieve your items. If contrast was administered, you will need to stay in the department for up to 1 hour after the injection to ensure that you are feeling well before you leave.

## When will I get my results?

After the scan, the images will be reviewed by a Radiologist who will report on the findings of the scan within the appropriate timeframe.

The report will be sent to the Doctor who referred you for the test, who will then discuss the findings of the scan with you. Please note that we will not be able to discuss your results directly with you, only your referring Doctor can do this.

