

## Patient Information – Computerised Tomography (CT)

### Department of Radiology

#### What is a CT scan?

A CT scanner is an X-ray machine which produces an image of a cross-section, or slice of the body. The scanner consists of a 'doughnut' shaped structure called a gantry, about 2ft / 60cms thick, which you move through lying on a couch. The X-rays pass through your body and are detected by electronic sensors within the gantry. The information is sent to a computer which then produces images of the internal structures of the body, which are displayed on a TV screen.

#### Are there any risks?

- This scan involves the use of ionising radiation; however, the risks are very low and are outweighed by the benefits of having the scan. Although the amount of radiation is more than that used for an ordinary X-ray of the chest or body, it is equal to the natural radiation we all receive from the atmosphere over a period of approximately three years.
- Many CT examinations involve having a contrast medium (sometimes referred to as a dye) injected into a vein in your arm in order to improve the quality of information obtained from the scan. There is a slight risk of an allergic reaction to the contrast medium, such as a skin rash, but it may lead to other significant complications. The radiology staff are trained to deal with any complications and the risk involved is very small.

#### Are there any precautions?

Please inform this department **before** you come for your examination if:

- you are, or think you may be pregnant;
- you are diabetic;
- you have kidney problems;
- you have had a reaction to a previous injection of contrast medium.

#### What happens during the procedure?

For some scans you will be required to undress and remove all jewellery and watches. A hospital gown and a basket for your clothes will be provided. You will be taken into the CT scanner room and asked to lie on the couch. The procedure will be explained to you before the couch is moved into position.

The staff will leave the scan room but you can talk to them via an intercom and they will be watching you whilst the scan is in progress. During the scan you may be asked to hold your breath.

Some scans require an injection of contrast medium into a vein in your arm. This may cause a warm feeling to pass around your body, but this feeling will only last for a short while. Following an injection, you will be asked to wait for 30 minutes before leaving the department.

### **How long will it take?**

The scan will usually take about 20 minutes, however more complex scans may take up to two hours. Occasionally, patients for emergency scans will need to take priority and your scan may be delayed.

### **Can I bring someone with me?**

A relative or a friend may accompany you to the department, but they will not be allowed into the scan room. **Please do not bring young children with you.**

### **When will I receive my results?**

The radiologist will study the images and send a report to your referring doctor. You will be able to discuss these results at your next appointment.

### **Feedback**

When you attend your hospital appointment you should be offered the Friends and Family Test survey asking you the question, “**How likely are you to recommend our service to friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment?**”. We welcome your comments about what was good about your visit and what would have made your experience better. Your feedback is anonymous and is used to help improve the services we provide to all our patients.

### **Contact details:**

Radiology Department  
Lister Hospital  
Coreys Mill Lane  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire SG1 4AB

Telephone: 01438 284030

Date of publication: August 2010  
Author: J. Charlwood & D. Piper  
Reference: CT v.4 (January 2018)  
Review Date: January 2021  
© East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust  
[www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)

You can request this information in a different format or another

