

Patient information leaflet CT scan (non-contrast)

Radiology department

Introduction

We hope this guide will answer your questions about your CT scan. Please contact the team if you require further information via the details at the end of this leaflet.

What is a CT Scan?

A computerised tomography (CT) scanner is a specialised piece of equipment, shaped like a very large doughnut. It uses X-rays and a computer to produce a series of cross-sectional images of your body, which gives the clinician more information than standard X-rays.

Why do I need a CT Scan?

You are having this examination as it will help your doctor to decide on the cause of your symptoms. This procedure will give clearer information to the clinicians treating you.

What are the associated risks of having a CT scan?

As a CT scan does involve the use of X-ray, there is a small risk associated with the radiation dose you will receive. The amount of radiation dose associated with a CT is greater than a plain X-ray because CT scans provide a more detailed 3D picture of what is going on inside the body. This detailed imaging can significantly aid your diagnosis or treatment.

When the referral is received by the imaging department (radiology), a team of radiologists and radiographers carefully check the request to see if the benefit of having the scan would outweigh the risk of the dose of radiation you will receive.

Due to ionising radiation regulations, only patients are allowed in the X-ray room.

Will I need an injection?

CT scans sometimes require an injection of a special dye (contrast media) into a vein in the arm or hand via a cannula. The dye is eliminated from the body through the kidneys.

This is administered to patients at the request of a radiologist (a specialist radiology doctor) to help enhance certain areas of the body.

Your scan has been requested as a **non-contrast** scan. However, it may still be necessary for you to have an injection if the doctor decides on the day that it is required.

The injection of contrast if needed can make you feel warm inside and may feel like you are urinating; this is normal and will pass very quickly.

Occasionally, an injection may cause an extravasation, which is a swelling around the injection site, where some of the contrast media has seeped into the tissues.

Allergic reactions to contrast medium are possible, but rare, and can usually be treated immediately.

The radiology staff are trained to deal with these complications as they arise.



Preparing for your procedure

You can eat and drink as you normally would prior to your CT Scan.

It is also important to inform the booking team if you are or may be pregnant.

Medication

Please continue to take all medications as usual prior to your CT scan.

Getting to us

Once you have arrived at The Princess Alexandra Hospital (Hamstel Road, Harlow, Essex, CM20 1QX), follow the signage to the radiology reception, which is located on the ground floor, green zone. Please let the radiology receptionist know that you have arrived for your appointment.

When should I arrive?

Please arrive in radiology department at your given appointment time. A notification through text or letter should have been sent to you to confirm this appointment.

Can someone stay with me in hospital?

You may have a friend or relative attend with you, but they will be asked to stay in the waiting area while you have your procedure.

Children are not allowed in the waiting area unattended. Our staff are not permitted to supervise children, so please ensure child care arrangements are in place to avoid your tests being rescheduled.

The day of the procedure

On the day of the procedure, the radiographer (the person who operates the CT scanner) will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you may have.

You may be asked to change into metal-free clothing and put on a hospital gown to avoid causing any interference whilst taking the scan images.

The procedure

The CT scanner is open on both sides so it is easy to see around you. You will be asked to lie on the scanning table on your back (for most examinations), and the radiographers will try to make you as comfortable as possible.

You will be asked to keep very still during the scan to avoid blurring the images and may be asked to follow some breathing instructions at certain points.

The scanning table will move in and out during the examination and the scanner will rotate around you, producing images of the part of your body part being scanned.

A CT scan is painless and typically takes around 5 minutes.

If contrast is required, this will be administered by the radiographer during the scan.

After the procedure

If you have not had contrast you will be free to leave straight after your scan.

If you have had an injection of contrast, you will be asked to sit in the CT waiting area after your scan for around 15minutes. This is to ensure there are no reactions to the injection.

The cannula will then be removed and you are discharged from the department. You are then able to continue with your normal activities.



Can I drive after my procedure?

You are able to drive as soon as you are discharged from the department.

How soon can I return to work?

You are able to return to work as soon as discharged from the department.

When will I get my results?

You will not know the results of your examination immediately. The radiologist will report their findings to the clinician who arranged your procedure, who will discuss the results with you. It usually takes a couple of weeks for the results to become available.

What is a recall and why may I need one?

A recall is when the radiologist has looked at your previous images from your scan and would like further images to aid your diagnosis. We may therefore need to ask you to attend a further appointment in the CT department.

Please do not be concerned, as radiologists cannot always be present to view and check the images at the time of your scan.

Contacting the team

If you have any further questions about your CT scan or an existing appointment, please contact the radiology department (**Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm**) at **01279 827179** and press option 1 for radiology appointments and then option 2 for CT.

If you have any queries **outside of working hours (after 4pm and on weekends)**, you will be redirected to the main radiology reception.

Please note appointment bookings cannot be made during this time.

Your feedback matters

If you would like to give feedback on your care, please contact our patient experience team at paht.pals@nhs.net or **01279 827211**.

Please contact the communications team at paht.communications@nhs.net if you would like this leaflet in another language or format.