



Home → Health Topics → CT Scans

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/ctscans.html>

CT Scans

Also called: CAT scan

Computed tomography (CT) is a type of imaging. It uses special x-ray equipment to make cross-sectional pictures of your body.

Doctors use CT scans to look for:

- Fractures [<https://medlineplus.gov/fractures.html>] (broken bones)
- Cancers
- Blood clots [<https://medlineplus.gov/bloodclots.html>]
- Signs of heart disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/heardiseases.html>]
- Internal bleeding

During a CT scan, you lie still on a table. The table slowly passes through the center of a large X-ray machine. The test is painless. During some tests you receive a contrast dye, which makes parts of your body show up better in the image.

NIH: National Cancer Institute

Start Here

- Computed Tomography (CT) Scans and Cancer [<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/diagnosis-staging/ct-scans-factsheet>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/cancer/diagnostico-estadificacion/hoja-informativa-tomografia-computarizada>]
- CT Scan [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/ct-scan/about/pac-20393675?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- What is Computed Tomography? [<https://www.fda.gov/radiation-emitting-products/medical-x-ray-imaging/what-computed-tomography>] (Food and Drug Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/tests-procedures/ct-scan/about/pac-20393675?p=1>]

Prevention and Risk Factors

- Full-Body CT Scans: What You Need to Know [<https://www.fda.gov/radiation-emitting-products/medical-x-ray-imaging/full-body-ct-scans-what-you-need-know>] (Food and Drug Administration)
- What Are the Radiation Risks from CT? [<https://www.fda.gov/radiation-emitting-products/medical-x-ray-imaging/what-are-radiation-risks-ct>] (Food and Drug Administration)
- Whole-Body CT Screening -- Should I or Shouldn't I Get One? [<https://www.fda.gov/radiation-emitting-products/medical-x-ray-imaging/whole-body-ct-screening-should-i-or-shouldnt-i-get-one>] (Food and Drug Administration)

Related Issues

- Contrast Materials [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/safety-contrast>]
 (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/safety-contrast>]

Specifics

- Abdominal and Pelvic CT (Computed Tomography) [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominct>]  (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/abdominct>]
- Body CT [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/bodyct>] (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/bodyct>]
- Coronary CTA (Computed Tomography Angiography) [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/angiocorct>] (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/angiocorct>]
- CT (Computed Tomography) of the Sinuses [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/sinusct>]  (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/sinusct>]
- CT Angiography (CTA) [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/angiocat>]  (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/angiocat>]
- CT Enterography [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/CTenterography>] (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/CTenterography>]
- CT Perfusion Imaging of the Head [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/perfusionheadct>] (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/perfusionheadct>]
- Head CT [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/headct>]  (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/headct>]
- Heart Tests [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/heart-tests>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/estudios-cardiacos>]
- Myelography [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/myelography/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/mielografia/>]
- SPECT (Single-Photon Emission Computerized Tomography) Scan [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/spect-scan/about/pac-20384925?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/tests-procedures/spect-scan/about/pac-20384925?p=1>]
- Spine CT [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/spinect>] (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/spinect>]
- Tests for Lung Disease [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/lung-tests>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/pruebas-pulmonares>]
- Urography [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/urography>] (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/urography>]
- Virtual Colonoscopy [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diagnostic-tests/virtual-colonoscopy>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/pruebas-diagnosticas/colonoscopia-virtual>]

Videos and Tutorials

- Getting a CAT Scan (For Kids) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/video-ctscan.html>]  (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/video-ctscan.html>]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Tomography, X-Ray Computed [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=%22Tomography,+X-Ray+Computed%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Appropriateness and safety of using the intranasal route for sedation during... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40679189>]
- Article: Feasibility study of "double-low" scanning protocol combined with artificial intelligence iterative... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40634847>]
- Article: Lung cancer screening in Finland: a prospective randomized trial. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40497290>]
- CT Scans -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Tomography%2C+X-Ray+Computed%22%5Bmajr%3Aexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Reference Desk

- RadiologyInfo: Glossary of Terms [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/glossary-index>] (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/glossary-index>]

Find an Expert

- Food and Drug Administration [<https://www.fda.gov/>]
- RadiologyInfo [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/>] (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es>]

Children

- Keeping Kids Still during Exams [<https://www.asrt.org/docs/default-source/patientpages/pedimmobilization.pdf>] (American Society of Radiologic Technologists) - PDF - In English and Spanish
- Pediatric CT [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/pedia-ct>]  (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/pedia-ct>]

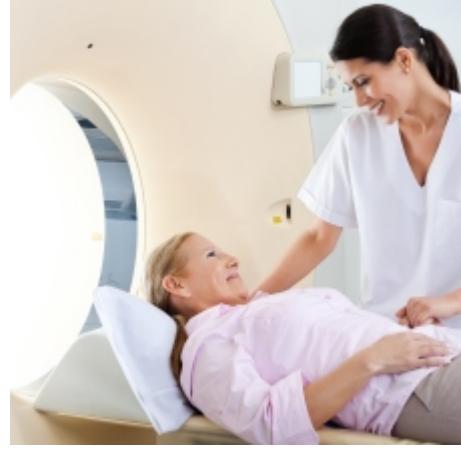
Women

- Radiation Exposure and Pregnancy [https://hps.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/pregnancy_fact_sheet.pdf] (Health Physics Society) - PDF

Patient Handouts

- Abdominal CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003789.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003789.htm>]
- Chest CT [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003788.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003788.htm>]
- CT angiography - abdomen and pelvis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007674.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007674.htm>]
- CT angiography - arms and legs [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007675.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007675.htm>]
- CT angiography - chest [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007676.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007676.htm>]
- CT angiography - head and neck [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007677.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007677.htm>]

- Head CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003786.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003786.htm>]
- Heart CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007344.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007344.htm>]
- Lumbar Spine CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007350.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007350.htm>]
- Lumbosacral spine CT [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003787.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003787.htm>]
- Pelvic CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007362.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007362.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Abdominal CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003789.htm>]
- Arm CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007347.htm>]
- Cervical spine CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007351.htm>]
- Chest CT [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003788.htm>]
- CT angiography - abdomen and pelvis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007674.htm>]
- CT angiography - arms and legs [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007675.htm>]
- CT angiography - chest [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007676.htm>]
- CT angiography - head and neck [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007677.htm>]
- CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003330.htm>]
- Head CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003786.htm>]
- Heart CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007344.htm>]
- Knee CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007345.htm>]
- Leg CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007348.htm>]
- Lumbar Spine CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007350.htm>]
- Lumbosacral spine CT [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003787.htm>]
- Orbit CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003785.htm>]
- Pelvic CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007362.htm>]
- Renal scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003790.htm>]
- Shoulder CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007346.htm>]

Sinus CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007349.htm>]

Thoracic spine CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007442.htm>]

Related Health Topics

[Diagnostic Imaging](https://medlineplus.gov/diagnosticimaging.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/diagnosticimaging.html>]

[X-Rays](https://medlineplus.gov/xrays.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/xrays.html>]

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies. MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our [disclaimer](https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our [quality guidelines](https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)

National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health

Last updated December 22, 2016