

# Computer Tomography (CT or CAT) Scan Pre- & Post-Procedure Instructions

---

## **What is a CT scan?**

CT scanning is an imaging study that uses x-rays taken from a series of different angles and arranged by a computer to create pictures of cross-sections of the body. A CT scan can focus on the chest, abdomen and pelvis, brain or spine.

## **When is it used?**

CT scanning provides more detailed information than regular x-rays. CT scans are especially useful for identifying tumors, enlarged lymph nodes, and cysts.

## **What happens during the procedure?**

The patient lies on a narrow table that slides into the center of the CT scanner. Once the patient is in the scanner, the x-ray beam of the machine rotates around the patient, and the computer creates images (slices) of the portion of the body being scanned. The images are projected onto a TV screen and prepared for examination by the physician.

A solution of dye (also called contrast) may be injected into a vein, or you may be asked to swallow a contrast solution. This allows the scanner to show more detail, particularly of abnormal areas, as the dye circulates through the body.

Scans rarely last longer than 30-45 minutes. They are painless, and the patient can talk to the technologist at any time during the procedure. Sedation is available if the patient becomes overly anxious.

## **Risks of CT scanning**

- an allergic reaction to the contrast dye: delayed reaction to the dye can cause itching, rash, sweating, or trouble breathing. The patient should drink plenty of fluids after the scan to rid the body of the dye
- kidney damage from the dye
- exposure to radiation

## **How do I prepare for this procedure?**

- Comfortable, loose-fitting clothing should be worn to the exam. A gown to wear is usually provided during the procedure.
- Metal objects, including jewelry, eyeglasses, dentures and hairpins may affect the CT images and should be left at home or removed prior to the scan.
- Be sure the health care provider knows if you are allergic to any medicines or chemicals such as iodine.
- Refrain from eating or drinking for 4 hours before the scan.

## **When should I call my doctor?**

- If you develop signs of an allergy to iodine contrast: nausea or vomiting, sneezing, itching or hives within the first few hours after the CT scan. Such an allergic reaction can be treated with antihistamines (Benadryl) or steroids.

## **Who should I call if I have questions?**

- Please contact our clinic at 734-936-8857 during office hours (Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.).
- After hours, holidays, and on weekends call Hospital Paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the General Thoracic Surgery Resident on call.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Authors: Erin Larowe & Mark B. Orringer, MD

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 5/2016