



Computed Tomography (CT or CAT scan)

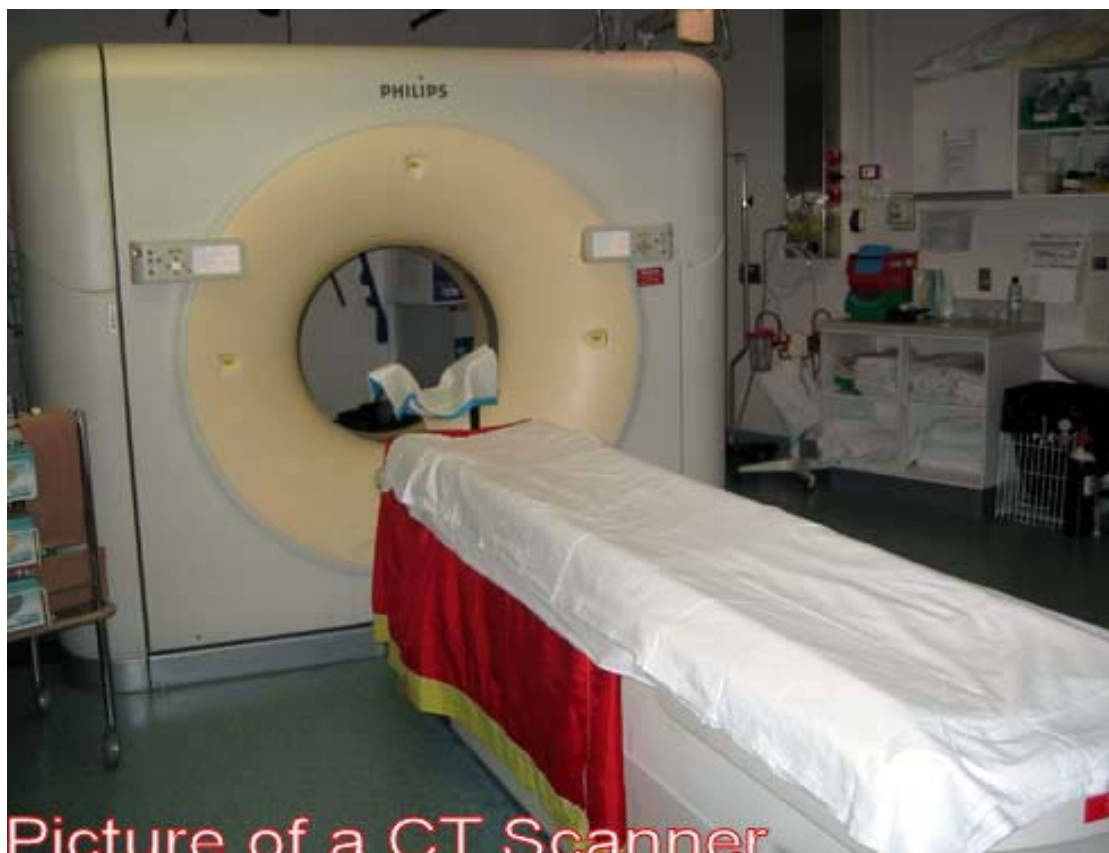
- This test uses radiation waves to enable cross sectional images of a particular part of the body to be produced. It is similar to a X-ray, though multiple pictures are taken and a complex computer software analyses and collates the data. CT is used for a variety of diagnostic and therapeutic cases.
- The scan requires you to lie on a table that moves and is surrounded by a large doughnut shaped machine with a hole in the middle. When the scan begins, a X-ray beam is transmitted through your body and different tissues absorb or block the beam as it passes through. Detectors capture these beams and cross sectional images of the area of the body that is being examined is generated by the computer.
- In order to prepare for the test you should wear loose clothing and remove any objects (eg necklaces, body piercings, rings) that may interfere with the test. Please bring previous CT scans with you. Depending on the area of body that is being examined, you may be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- The CT scan will be performed by a technologist who is trained in taking the most appropriate films. S/he will ask you to lay on the table, which is in a special room. You will be able to stay in contact with the radiation technologist and s/he will be able to see you during the test. S/he will ask you at times to remain completely still or to hold your breath. Depending on the area of the body being examined, a 'contrast dye' may be injected and/or given by mouth to enable higher quality images to be taken.
- An ordinary CT scan is painless. If you have the 'contrast dye' there may be a slight unpleasent feeling in the arm the contrast is injected or a metallic taste in the mouth. This will pass. You cannot see or feel the X-ray beam. The length of the test is dependant on the area of the body being examined. It will normally take between 5-20 minutes.



- CT scans are a very safe procedure, though there are risks. During the scan you are exposed to a dose of radiation. Depending on the area of the body being examined, the dose of radiation will vary. Rest assured that your referring doctor and radiologist will have judged that the information gained from the scan will outweigh the small risk associated with radiation exposure.

If you require a 'contrast dye' there is a small risk of an allergic reaction that can be treated. In addition, the dye can cause damage to the kidneys. You must inform your doctor if you have kidney problems, are elderly, take multiple medications or suffer with diabetes as these are risk factors. You must also inform your doctor if you are pregnant or think that you may be as there is a risk with radiation and an unborn fetus.

- Once you have had your CT scan, return to your local doctor to discuss the results. The radiologist will have had an opportunity to review the films and issue a report to your doctor, based on the history provided by your doctor on the request form. Depending on the policy of the radiology practice you are referred to, you may be able to have a hard copy of your CT scan or a CD for future reference.



Picture of a CT Scanner

