



Diagnostic Imaging

COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY – CT SCAN

Introduction

This leaflet gives you the information you need before having a CT scan. Please read this leaflet carefully and hopefully it will answer some of the questions you may have.

Where to find us

Dorset County Hospital is on Williams Avenue, Dorchester. Use the entrance S1 (South Wing, Level 1) and go to the Diagnostic Imaging Department to check in at reception.

Parking is available in the multi storey car park but can get busy so please allow plenty of time. When entering the car park, you will receive a ticket at the barrier, which you will use to pay at a machine before leaving the car park.

What is a CT scan?

A CT scan is a type of x-ray. CT stands for Computed Tomography and simply refers to the technology in the equipment which takes highly detailed pictures of many structures in the body, including internal organs, vessels and bones. Unlike a standard X-ray, a CT scan requires you to lie on a narrow table which slowly passes through a circular hole whilst it takes sliced images throughout your body.

You must inform the staff if you are, or think you may be, pregnant.

Staff may also need to know if you are diabetic.

How do I prepare for the scan?

Please follow the instructions on your appointment letter. Metal fastenings like zips, poppers and hook and eye show up on the scan, so we might ask you to change into a hospital gown. If you can avoid these types of clothes we might not ask you to change.

Your appointment letter might ask you to drink a litre of water or squash prior to your scan. This helps your kidney function and gives us better images. You will be able to use the toilet whenever necessary. This fluid needs to be drunk up to one hour before your scan. Please do this in advance of your appointment as instructed in your appointment letter.

Your appointment includes preparation time before your scan time, which can be delayed by emergency cases.

How long does the scan take?

The length of the scan will vary depending on the type of scan and which area we are scanning but it typically takes between 10-20 minutes. Due to the preparation and potential emergencies, you can expect to be in the department for up to one hour, but most examinations are completed sooner than this.

Can I bring a relative or friend with me?

A relative or friend can accompany you to the hospital, but they will usually not be allowed to be in the CT scan room. Please note we have limited seating and do not have childcare facilities therefore you are advised not to bring small children with you to your appointment.

What happens during the scan?

Your CT scan will be undertaken by a radiographer who is specially trained to carry out scans.

- The radiographer will invite you into the room and ask you to lie down on the scan table.
- The radiographer will ask you multiple questions about your health and ask whether or not you are pregnant, if you are at childbearing age, regardless of gender.
- A cannula/needle will be inserted into your arm if you are having a scan with contrast (dye).
- The radiographers will position you in the scanner for your exam and leave the room whilst they take the images. You may be asked to hold your breath during the scan for a few seconds at a time.

Why might I need an injection?

CT is used to look at areas where no natural contrast exists. In that case the radiographer will give you an injection of dye called contrast medium which consists of iodine. This has the effect of creating artificial contrast which clearly shows up the area your doctor wants to investigate for damage or disease. The contrast may give you a hot sensation as it goes through your body, followed by a feeling that you've urinated.

What happens after the scan?

You can return to normal activity after your scan is complete. If you were given an injection of contrast, a dressing will be applied on to the injection site, and you will be encouraged to drink plenty of fluids throughout the day to flush it out of your system.

When and how will I get the results of the scan?

You will not receive the results straight away. Your scan will be examined by a radiologist, who will interpret the images (there may be more than 1000 images) and send a report to the doctor that referred you to us for your scan. Please do not ask the radiographer for information about your scan.

Any questions or concerns?

We hope that you have found this leaflet useful. If you have any questions, or if you are worried about anything, please contact the referring doctor or the CT department on 01305 255397.

Sources of Further Information

Further information about CT scans are available online;

Visit www.sor.org and search for 'patient information'

Visit www.nhs.uk and search for 'CT scan'

The Society of Radiographers have various short videos on YouTube showing how CT scans are used.

Hospital information including site map can be found online at www.dchft.nhs.uk

You can also contact NHS 111 - 24 hours a day on 111 or <https://111.nhs.uk/>

About this leaflet:

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If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email patientinformation.leaflets@dchft.nhs.uk



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