



## **Diagnostic Imaging**

# **COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY CARDIAC CT SCAN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This leaflet gives you the information you need to have before having a Cardiac CT scan. Please read the leaflet carefully and hopefully it will answer any 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 Cardiac CT scan?**

Computed Tomography, or CT for short, is a type of Xray machine that takes highly detailed pictures of many structures in the body. Based upon your symptoms, you have been referred for a Cardiac CT scan which takes pictures of your heart and associated blood vessels. Unlike a standard Xray, 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.



## **How do I prepare for the scan?**

Please be aware that we cannot look after children during your scan so please arrange childcare.

Please avoid caffeine (tea, coffee, energy drinks, chocolate) and nicotine for 4 hours prior to your scan as this can increase your heart rate. If you are taking any medication, please continue to do so, but please refrain from using Viagra on the day of your scan.

Try to avoid wearing jewellery as this will need to be removed if within the area we are scanning.

Drink plenty of water or squash prior to your scan, this helps with your kidney function. You can empty your bladder during this time.

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

## **Can I bring a relative or friend with me?**

A relative or friend can accompany you to the hospital, but they will not be allowed to be in the CT scan room. Please note we have limited seating.

## **How long does the scan take?**

The length of the scan itself typically takes 5-10 minutes however due to the prior preparation and aftercare required, expect to be in the department for up to one hour.

## **What happens during the scan?**

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

- Upon arrival, you will be asked to change into a hospital gown so we can place electrodes on your chest to monitor your heart rate and rhythm throughout the scan. You will also be given a questionnaire about your health to complete.

An assistant will place a cannula into your arm. Your blood pressure and heart rate will also be monitored at this time.

- The radiographer will invite you into the room and ask you to lie down on the scan table. ECG stickers will be placed on to your chest to record your heart rate and you will be asked multiple questions about your health.
- The cardiac nurse or doctor will give you two tablets to dilate the blood vessels in your heart and might give you medication to slow down your heart rate if it is too high. This will be fully explained to you before the scan, including any side effects you might experience.
- The radiographers will position you in the scanner for your exam and leave the room whilst they take the images. You will be asked to hold your breath during the scan for a few seconds at a time.

## **Why will 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 highlights the heart and vessels to look 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 may be kept in the department for a further 15 minutes following your scan whilst we do some further monitoring of your heart rate and blood pressure. 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 the Xray dye 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](http://www.sor.org) and search for 'patient information'
- Visit [www.nhs.uk](http://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](http://www.dchft.nhs.uk)

You can also contact NHS 111 24 hours a day on 111 or [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.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](mailto:patientinformation.leaflets@dchft.nhs.uk)



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