

Prepare for a CAT SCAN

A computerized tomography (CT) scan combines a series of X-ray images taken from different angles around your body and uses computer processing to create cross-sectional images (slices) of the bones, blood vessels and soft tissues inside your body. CT scan images provide more-detailed information than plain X-rays do.

Patient Safety Tips Prior to a Diagnostic Exam in Radiology

- Please let us know if you have any allergies or adverse reactions to medications.
- Please leave your valuables at home or in your room in the hospital.
- Please let us know if you need interpreting services, this can be arranged for you.
- Late arrival policy: If you are more than 15 minutes late for your appointment there is a possibility you may not be seen possibly rescheduled for your examination. Being seen for your appointment will be left to the discretion of your provider based on the nature of your concern and the schedule of the provider.

Preparation for the Exam

- The preparation for a CT scan will vary, you may be asked not to eat for 4 hours prior to the test.

During the Exam

- The technologist will verify your identification and exam requested.
- A special dye called contrast material is needed for some CT scans to help highlight the areas of your body being examined. The contrast material blocks X-rays and appears white on images, which can help emphasize blood vessels, intestines, or other structures.

Contrast material might be given to you:

- **By mouth.** If your esophagus or stomach is being scanned, you may need to swallow a liquid that contains contrast material. This drink may taste unpleasant.

- **injection.** Contrast agents can be injected through a vein in your arm to help your gallbladder, urinary tract, liver or blood vessels stand out on the images. You may experience a feeling of warmth during the injection or a metallic taste in your mouth.
- CT scanners are shaped like a large doughnut standing on its side. You lie on a narrow, motorized table that slides through the opening into a tunnel. Straps and pillows may be used to help you stay in position. During a head scan, the table may be fitted with a special cradle that holds your head still.
- A technologist in a separate room can see and hear you. You will be able to communicate with the technologist via intercom. The technologist may ask you to hold your breath at certain points to avoid blurring the images.

After the procedure

After the exam you can return to your normal routine. If you were given contrast material, you may receive special instructions. In some cases, you may be asked to wait for a short time before leaving to ensure that you feel well after the exam. After the scan, you'll likely be told to drink lots of fluids to help your kidneys remove the contrast material from your body.

Results

Your provider will give you the results usually within a few days.