

CT Patient Information

A computed tomography (CT) scan is an advanced form of X-ray. It may be used to visualize internal organs as well as the head, neck, spine or extremities. Physicians generally order a CT scan when they need to see more details than a regular X-ray can capture. CT imaging is able to show several types of tissue - lung, bones, soft tissue and blood vessels - with great clarity.

How it works:

A computer together with a rotating X-ray device is used to create detailed cross sectional and/or three dimensional images of body tissues and organs. These images are referred to as “slices”. Imagine the body as a loaf of bread and you are looking at one end of the loaf. As you remove each slice of the bread, you can see the entire surface of that slice from the crust to the center. The body is seen on CT scan slices in a similar way, from the skin to the central part of the body.

The more slices a scanner can create, the more detailed the images will be. Our advanced Siemens Definition AS CT scanner was the first 128-slice CT unit locally in an outpatient setting, and provides doctors with clear imaging to help them make accurate diagnoses. Additionally, our Siemens unit has special applications that reduce patient radiation exposure by as much as 60 percent.

During and after the exam:

The CT scanner looks like a large donut with a table in the middle. Your body may be supported by pillows to help you maintain proper positioning.

Depending on the test ordered, the radiologist may inject contrast dye intravenously to highlight certain tissues. Additionally, you may be asked to drink an oral contrast called barium prior to the

exam.

Once the exam begins, the table will move into the round opening of the CT scanner while the X-ray tubes rotate around your body. To achieve precise results, the technologists may ask you to hold your breath for a short time while lying still to avoid blurring the images. Due to the speed of the CT, the entire body is usually able to be scanned during a single breath hold.

The technologist will be monitoring your scan from the control room and will be in contact with you during your scan. You can expect to be in the imaging room for approximately 10-15 minutes although the actual scan time is often much less.

If contrast was used for your scan, you will want to continue to drink fluids, especially water, to flush it from your body. The radiologist will review your scan and send the results to your physician.