

# Having a CT Scan

## Patient Information – Radiology Services

### What is a CT Scan

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A computed tomography scan (CT scan) is a specially designed system using a rotating x-ray source, that moves around the body. A section of the body is scanned, and information is collected, this is used to produce three-dimensional images of your body.

### How to prepare for a CT Scan

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Some CT scans require preparation before the scan e.g. to have fluids only for a period. If this is required for your scan, the instructions will be in your appointment letter.

Some CT scans require you to have a blood test before your scan. If this is required for your scan, a blood test form will be sent with your appointment letter. You will need to have the blood test 3-4 days before your appointment.

If there is a possibility that you may be pregnant, please inform the staff when you arrive at your appointment.

### Having a CT Scan with Contrast

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Often a CT scan will include an injection of contrast x-ray dye, this is used to highlight blood vessels and other tissues.

The iodine-based solution is injected into a vein in your arm via a cannula (or a vascular access device, if you have one). You may feel a warm flush, this is a normal sensation. If you feel any other discomfort it is important to let the staff know.

Our staff will discuss the possible side effects with you at your appointment and answer any questions you may have. They will ask you to sign a consent form, for patients under 16 years of age a parent or guardian must be with them to sign the consent form.

#### Possible Side Effects:

- For most people there are no side effects or discomfort.
- Mild side effects include nausea, vomiting, skin rash and a general feeling of warmth. These usually wear off while you are in the Radiology Department.
- Moderate side effects include chills, fever, hives, headache, shortness of breath and a rising or falling of blood pressure.
- Severe allergic reactions are rare, they can require emergency treatment. Extremely rarely they can result in injury or death. A severe reaction normally occurs immediately, and our staff are equipped to deal with this.
- Uncommonly, the contrast injection can leak out under your skin (this is called extravasation) causing temporary swelling and discomfort in your arm. If this happens we will give you information on how to manage it.

If you have had an allergic reaction to an injection of contrast x-ray dye in the past, please call us before your appointment on (03) 364 0760.

If you are breastfeeding please call us on (03) 364 0760 and we will send you information about having contrast x-ray dye while breastfeeding.

At your appointment, it is important to tell the staff looking after you if you have any allergies or medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, heart conditions etc.

## **For patients with Diabetes having a CT Scan**

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**Insulin:** If you take insulin, please call us on (03) 364 0760 so we can arrange an early morning appointment time for your scan.

**Metformin:** If you take Metformin or a medication combined with Metformin i.e. Jardiamet or Galvumet. Please let the radiology nurse know on arrival at your appointment. They will give you advise on what is required after your CT scan.

If you have any concerns regarding your diabetes and consuming fluids only before your CT scan, please contact your GP or your diabetes specialist for advice.

## **What happens during a CT Scan**

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You may be asked to change into a gown before your scan, during the scan you will be fully awake and lie on a scanning bed that moves slowly through the scanning unit.

You will not feel any discomfort during the scan, which will take from 5 to 30 minutes.

## **After a CT Scan**

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If you have had an injection of contrast x-ray dye you will need to stay for at least 20 minutes after the scan.

You can eat and drink normally following your scan.

Following an injection of contrast x-ray dye, it is recommended that you drink several glasses of water over the next few hours, to help flush it out of your kidneys.

If you develop a rash in the days following your scan, please seek medical advice.

The results of the CT scan will be sent to your referrer.

For more information about:

- your health and medication, go to [www.healthinfo.org.nz](http://www.healthinfo.org.nz)
- hospital and specialist services, go to [www.cdhb.health.nz](http://www.cdhb.health.nz)