



If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: [customercare@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:customercare@salisbury.nhs.uk)

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: [www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily](http://www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily) or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

Author: Charlotte Howes  
Role: Lead Radiographer  
Date written: June 2010  
Next review due: October 2021  
Version: 2.1  
Code: PI0355

## **Having a CT Scan** (1 of 3)

This information leaflet tells you about a CT scan. It explains how the test is done, the risks involved, and what to expect.

Please read this information leaflet very carefully. If you are not sure about the procedure please telephone us on 01722 429282.

### **What is a CT scan?**

A CT scan is carried out using a special x-ray machine which produces an image of a cross section, or 'slice' of the body. The scanner consists of a 'doughnut-shaped' structure about two feet thick, through which you pass whilst lying on a couch.

A narrow, fan-shaped beam of x-rays is produced from inside the scanner and is rotated around you. The x-rays pass through your body and are detected by electronic sensors on the other side of the scanner. This information then passes to a computer which produces a picture of the internal structure of the body. The pictures are displayed on a TV screen and can be examined by the radiologist.

It takes about a second to produce each 'slice', which can vary in thickness from one millimetre to one centimetre, depending on how much of the body is being scanned.

### **Are there any risks?**

CT scanning involves x-rays. **Female patients who are, or might be, pregnant must inform a member of staff before the scan.**

The amount of radiation used is more than an ordinary x-ray of the chest or body and is equal to the natural radiation we receive from the environment over a period of about: 1 year for a CT scan of the head, 3 years for a CT of the chest or 4½ years for a CT scan of the abdomen or pelvis).

Many CT examinations involve having a contrast medium injected into a vein in order to increase the amount of information available from the scan. The injection usually causes nothing more than a warm feeling passing around your body but occasionally it can produce minor temporary reactions such as nausea (feeling sick) or a rash.

Despite these minor risks, your doctor believes you should have this examination. Bear in mind there are greater risks from missing a serious disorder by not having the examination.

**Clinical Radiology**  
**01722 429282**

## **Is there any special preparation?**

Depending on the part of the body to be scanned, you may be given instructions about preparation you need to make. The radiographer will explain what will happen at the time of your scan.

## **What if I am pregnant?**

If you are pregnant, or think you might be, please telephone the department (01722 336262 ext 4282) before your appointment.

## **What do I do when I arrive in the department?**

Please report to the Reception Desk in the CT/MRI Department. You will be asked to take a seat in the waiting room. A member of the team will collect you and check your details.

For certain types of CT examinations patients will be asked to drink a Barium Sulphate solution over an hour before having their scan. This is so that we can see your bowel clearly.

## **What happens next?**

The radiographer will explain the procedure for your examination. If you need to remove your clothing you will be shown to a private cubicle and asked to put on a surgical gown. You should tell the radiographer if you have diabetes, asthma or any allergies.

## **Who will I see?**

A radiographer, who is highly trained to carry out x-rays and other imaging procedures.

## **What happens during a CT examination?**

You will be taken into the special x-ray room and made comfortable on the couch. Straps and pillows may be used to help you stay in the correct position during the examination. You may be given an injection of a contrast medium into a vein in your arm. The couch will be moved slowly within the scanner to position the part of your body under investigation.

Once you have been positioned correctly, the radiographers will move to a separate room (control room) but you will be able to talk to them via an intercom, and they will be able to see you all the time. When you are moved into the scanner, special lights may be used to make sure that you are properly positioned. With modern CT scanners, you will only hear slight buzzing, clicking and whirring sounds as the scanner revolves.

During the scan you may be asked to hold your breath or not to swallow while each image is being produced. If you feel any discomfort or are worried, please tell the radiographer immediately.

Once the scanning is completed you may be asked to wait until the images are checked to see that they are of high enough quality for the radiologist to read.

## **Will it be uncomfortable?**

No. You will not feel any pain, although you might feel a slight discomfort from having to lie still, or from having a full bladder or rectum if this is required for the examination.

## **How long will the examination take?**

If you are given fluid to drink on arrival, you might have to wait an hour before entering the scanning room. The scanning process will then take about 20 minutes. Unless there is an delay, such as having to wait for an emergency patient, the total time in the department will be about 90 minutes.

## **What happens afterwards?**

You might need to visit the toilet again. You can drive yourself home afterwards and may return to work as necessary. If you have had a contrast injection, you should wait at least one hour before driving.

## **Can I eat and drink afterwards?**

Yes.

## **When will I get the results?**

The images will be examined after your visit and a written report on the findings will be sent to your referring doctor. This normally takes 7 days.

## **Where can I get more information?**

If you have any questions about the examination please ring clinical radiology on 01722 429282 between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday