

# CT Scan

## Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn:

- What a CT scan is
- How to prepare for the scan
- What to expect
- Who to contact if you have any questions

### Joint Department of Medical Imaging

Your appointment is at:

Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_



**Mount Sinai  
Hospital**

Sinai Health System  
Joseph & Wolf Lebovic  
Health Complex



Patient Education



**UHN**

Toronto General  
Toronto Western  
Princess Margaret  
Toronto Rehab  
Michener Institute

## What is a CT Scan?

A Computed Tomography or CT scan uses special x-ray equipment and computers to create many images (pictures) of your body. These images can be looked at on a computer screen, printed, or copied onto a CD.

CT scans give more detailed information than regular x-rays. It is usually painless, fast and easy.



CT Scan

## How do I prepare for the scan?

- You can continue to eat solid foods and drink liquids up to the time of your CT scan.
- We may ask you to drink an oral contrast 30 minutes before a CT scan of your abdomen. The oral contrast will be a liquid that makes your stomach and bowels easier to see on the CT scan.
- Sometimes IV contrast (a kind of dye) is injected into a vein in your arm or hand during the scan. This contrast makes it easier for us to see certain parts of your body. Tell your doctor before your appointment is scheduled if you have ever had a reaction to IV contrast in the past.
- If so, you will need to take some medicine 13 hours and 1 hour before your appointment. This will help prevent another reaction from happening. Your referring doctor will need to arrange this for you before the appointment.

- If you are having a biopsy, you may need to do extra things to prepare. You will get the instructions from your doctor or from the Central Booking staff in the Medical Imaging Department.

**You must bring someone with you who can help you get home afterwards.**

If you have any questions, call your referring doctor or the Medical Imaging Central Booking office at 416 340 4800 extension 3384. They can talk to you about what you should do before or after your biopsy.

- If you have diabetes or kidney disease, you need blood work to check your serum creatinine. This is to check how well your kidneys are working.

The results of the blood work must be sent to the Central Booking office **before** your appointment. Please ask your doctor to fax your blood work results to us as soon as they are ready. Have your doctor put your CT appointment date on the blood work.

**Fax numbers:**

Toronto General Hospital	416 340 4661
Toronto Western Hospital	416 340 4661
Princess Margaret Cancer Centre	416 946 6564
Mount Sinai Hospital	416 586 3180
Women's College Hospital	416 323 6316

**Your appointment will have to be rescheduled if:**

- you haven't had the blood work
- it was done more than 3 months before your appointment

If you didn't have the blood work done, and we are able to accommodate you, you might be asked to have the blood work done on the day of your scan. You will have to wait until the results are ready before the CT scan can be done. This can take 4 hours or longer.

- Continue to take your usual medicines before the scan.
- Bring your Ontario health card (OHIP) with you.
- Please leave any valuable items at home.
- **It is important to arrive before your appointment to allow for check-in time.** If you are more than 15 minutes late, we may need to reschedule your appointment.

## **Are there any risks?**

### **Oral Contrast**

You may be asked to drink an oral contrast up to 30 minutes before your CT scan. It is very rare for patients to be allergic to oral contrast. Some patients may get constipation or diarrhea. If you do, you can buy something from the drugstore to help you feel better.

### **Intravenous (IV) Contrast**

Most people don't have any problems from the IV contrast. Only 1 to 3 out of 100 people will have a mild reaction to the contrast. This could include itching, sneezing or hives (skin rash). These usually go away by themselves. Taking medicines like Benadryl can also help.

Even fewer people may have slight wheezing or swelling around their eyes. In very rare cases, more serious reactions can happen like:

- a fall in blood pressure
- seizures
- shortness of breath
- kidney damage

In extremely rare cases, these reactions can cause death. Only 1 or 2 out of 10,000 people will have a serious reaction. Your doctor can tell you more about the benefits and risks of IV contrast.

## **Radiation**

CT scans use more radiation than an ordinary x-ray. We use as little radiation as possible to get good images.

Being exposed to x-rays in higher amounts can cause cancer or other illnesses. But, the risk from a single CT scan is extremely low. Your doctor feels that the benefits of having the scan outweigh the risks.

A fetus that is exposed to radiation may have a slightly higher risk of developing defects or childhood cancers. **If you are or might be pregnant, tell your doctor and the technologist before the scan.** Please talk to your doctor if you have any questions about your radiation risk.

## **What can I expect?**

A regular CT scan takes about 10 to 20 minutes, but you might be at the hospital for about 1 to 2 hours. This will depend on what type of scan you are having. We do our best to stay on schedule, but sometimes there are delays because of emergencies.

Here is what you can expect during the scan:

1. The technologist or patient flow coordinator will ask you some questions about:
  - your medical history
  - allergies, and
  - what medicines you are taking
2. You may be asked to change into a gown and remove jewelry, dentures, hearing aids, and other metal objects.
3. You will lie down on a narrow table.

4. If you are having IV contrast injected, the technologist will put a needle into your arm or hand. The contrast might make you feel:
  - warm and flushed
  - like you have a metal taste in your mouth
  - like you have to urinate (pee)These feelings all pass quickly.
5. The table you are on will slide into the machine. The part of your body being scanned will be in the middle of the machine.
6. The technologist will leave the room but will still be able to see, hear, and speak with you.
7. The technologist will ask you to lie still and sometimes hold your breath while the machine takes pictures.
8. You might hear buzzing or clicking noises from the scanner. These are normal.
9. When the scan is done, the table will move out of the machine and the technologist will help you get off the table.

## **What happens after my CT Scan?**

- Unless you have another test, you can eat and drink normally after your scan.
- If you had oral contrast or IV contrast, drink lots of extra fluids over the next 24 hours. This will help to flush them out of your body.
- A reaction to the contrast can happen up to 7 days after it was injected. You will get an information card that will tell you what to watch for and the phone number to call if this happens. Delayed reactions are usually mild but still need to be recorded in our system.
- Letting your doctor know if you had a reaction is important. They can use this information to plan for any future CT scans.
- If you take Metformin for diabetes, you may be asked to stop taking it for 2 days after the CT scan. If you are asked to stop, you will get instructions before you go home.

- A doctor who specializes in reading CT scans will review your images and send a report to your doctor. If you have any questions about your results, call your doctor to talk about them.

## **How do I find the medical imaging department?**

### **Toronto General Hospital**

585 University Avenue  
Munk Building – 1st floor  
Phone: 416 340 3365

From University Avenue, go in the first door south of College Street. This is the Peter Munk entrance. Walk up the stairs towards Tim Hortons. Medical Imaging is on the right, just before you get to Tim Hortons.

If you enter the hospital from Elizabeth Street, take the elevators on your right (with blue tiles) or the stairs to the first floor.

Walk toward the Peter Munk Elevators (there are signs on the wall). As you pass Tim Hortons, you will see Medical Imaging on your left.

Parking is available in the Elizabeth Street Parkade and under the hospital off Gerrard Street.

### **Toronto Western Hospital**

399 Bathurst Street – East Wing, 3rd floor  
Phone: 416 603 5249

From Dundas or Bathurst Street, turn left at the Tim Hortons, walk through the atrium and turn right after the food court.

Walk down the hall to the East Elevators. They will be on your right side. Take the elevators to the 3rd floor. Medical Imaging reception is next to the elevators when you get out.

From Nassau Street, turn left and go down the hall until you come to the East Elevators. They will be on your right. Take the elevators to the 3rd floor. Medical Imaging reception is next to the elevators when you get out.

From Leonard Avenue, go down the hall until you come to the East Elevators. They will be on your left. Take the elevators to the 3rd floor. Medical Imaging reception is next to the elevators when you get out.

### **Princess Margaret Cancer Centre**

610 University Avenue  
3rd floor, Room 625  
Phone: 416 946 2889

From University Avenue, use the main entrance. Pass Tim Hortons, go through the glass doors, and walk straight ahead to the glass elevators.

Take the glass elevators to the 3rd floor. When you get off the elevator, turn left to find Medical Imaging Reception.

There is parking behind the hospital on Murray Street. There are two parking garages. Street parking is also available. If you enter the hospital from Murray Street, you will see the glass elevators on your right.

### **Mount Sinai Hospital**

600 University Avenue – 5th floor  
Phone: 416 586 4800 extension 4418

From University Avenue, go past the Indigo store and take the elevators on the right to the 5th floor. You will see Medical Imaging reception when you get off the elevators.

From Murray Street, walk straight ahead to the elevators on the left side just before the Indigo store. Take the elevator to the 5th floor and check in at Medical Imaging reception.

**Note:** If you are coming for an appointment after 8:00 pm, take the Murray Street elevators which are near the Murray Street entrance, past the information desk. Take these elevators to the 5th floor and register at the MRI reception desk near the elevator.

## Women's College Hospital

76 Grenville Street – 2nd floor (Room 2305)

Phone: 416 323 6400 extension 4833

From Grenville Street, walk straight ahead to the elevators and go to the 2nd floor. Turn left and go to the office with glass walls in front of you. From Grosvenor Street, follow the signs to the elevators. Take the elevator to the 2nd floor. Turn left and go to the office with glass walls in front of you.

## Who can I call if I have any questions?

Please call your doctor if you have any questions about why this test has been ordered for you. If you have any questions about the test itself, call the hospital where you have your appointment:

Toronto General Hospital:	416 340 3365
Toronto Western Hospital:	416 603 5249
Princess Margaret Cancer Centre:	416 946 2889
Mount Sinai Hospital:	416 586 4800 extension 4418
Women's College Hospital:	416 323 6400 extension 4833

## Where can I get more information?

Website: [www.radiologyinfo.org](http://www.radiologyinfo.org)

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