

CT Scan



Risk Information for Inpatients

UHN



What is a CT scan?

A CT scan uses special x-ray equipment and computers to take pictures of the body. These images can then be examined on a computer monitor, printed or transferred to a CD.

How long will my CT scan take?

A CT scan takes about 10 to 20 minutes. Some CT scans can take longer depending on the type of scan being done.

What do I need to know about my CT scan?

Your unit nurse or doctor will talk to you about what needs to be done to get you ready for your CT scan. They will talk to you about the specific type of CT scan you are having, what part of the body is being looked at, and any other information that is important for you to know.

What are the risks?

Your unit nurse or doctor will talk to you about the CT scan you are having and any risks to you when having the scan.

Please visit the UHN Patient Education website for more health information:

www.uhnpatienteducation.ca

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Author: Medical Imaging
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University Health Network
Toronto General Hospital | Toronto Western Hospital | Princess Margaret Hospital

Some of the risks that could be discussed with you may include:

Oral Contrast

Oral contrast is given to patients for some CT scans. It is very rare that patients react to oral contrast. Some patients may have constipation or diarrhea after oral contrast.

IV Contrast

Most people do not have any reaction to the IV contrast dye used during a CT scan.

- Some people may have a mild reaction to IV contrast, such as itching, sneezing or hives. These reactions usually happen right away and go away without treatment, or respond quickly to medication like Benadryl™. Less common reactions include slight wheezing or swelling around the eyes.
- In very rare cases, some people may have a severe reaction, such as a fall in blood pressure, shortness of breath, seizures, kidney damage, and in extremely rare instances, even death. If you have any questions or concerns about this, please talk to your CT technologist when you go for your scan.

Radiation risk

- CT scans expose you to ionizing radiation (x-rays). Exposure to ionizing radiation could potentially increase your lifetime risk for cancer. CT scans expose you to low amounts of radiation, so are considered low risk.
- A fetus (baby) exposed to ionizing radiation (x-rays) may have a slightly increased risk of developing defects or childhood cancers. **If you may be pregnant**, please tell your doctor right away.
- If you have any questions about your personal radiation risk, please talk with your doctor.

Our CT staff are very aware of the potential risks of radiation and will use as small an amount of radiation as possible to get the best pictures.

What should I watch for after my CT scan?

Watch for a delayed reaction to the I.V. contrast such as a rash or hives.

Please tell your nurse or doctor right away if you think you are having a delayed reaction.

Patients who have a reaction will need to be pre-medicated if they need to have IV contrast in the future.