



Information about your CT scan

A guide for patients and their carers



This leaflet explains what happens when you come for a CT (computed tomography) scan.

This is sometimes called a CAT Scan (computerised axial tomographic scan). The scanner is like a ring with a large hole, it is not an enclosed tunnel. The patient lies on the table which moves through this hole.

What is a CT scan?

A CT scan uses X-rays linked to a computer to produce a series of images of the body. These images or pictures are in cross-section like 'slices' through the body.

Is there any preparation for my CT scan?

- You can eat and drink normally before your scan. (If you do have to fast, we will tell you beforehand). You should continue to take your medication as usual.
- If you are taking metformin, please ring the department on **0161 446 3884** when you receive this information.
- When you arrive, we may give you a special drink which outlines your stomach and bowel on the scan. We will ask you to take the drink over a period of 1 HOUR before the scan.
- If you have a colostomy or ileostomy please let us know when you arrive. The drink may affect your stoma so you may wish to bring spare stoma bags with you.
- If you have a Portacath or PICC line that may be compatible with the CT injector, please tell a member of staff when you arrive in the department.
- The staff may ask you to undress in a cubicle. There is a cotton gown to wear. You may like to bring a dressing gown with you. **If your own clothing does not have**

any metal on it such as decorations or fastenings, you may not need to undress for the scan.

- The radiographer or radiographic aide will explain all about the procedure and then take you into the scanner room.

What happens during my CT scan?

- We will ask you to lie down on the table. The table is motorised and it moves slowly through the scanner. We can then take images or pictures at different levels throughout the body.
- We need to see your organs and vessels clearly. To do this, we may have to give an injection of a contrast agent (a colourless liquid) into your arm. The radiographer will do this.
- When we are taking an image, we will ask you to hold your breath for a few seconds. This is very important so that we can get good images.
- Although we cannot stay in the scan room with you, you can speak to us at any time via an intercom.
- Your actual scan should take about 5 –10 minutes.

Will I feel anything during the CT scan?

You may feel a warm sensation during the injection but you should not feel any discomfort during the scan.

What happens after my CT scan?

- The radiographer may ask you to wait 15 minutes before your cannula is removed and then you can get dressed. You will then be advised to stay within the hospital for a further 15 minutes before you go home to make sure you have no reaction to the injection. All patients who have had an X-ray contrast injection are advised to drink plenty of water for the 24 hours after their scan.
- The radiographer will check your scan for technical quality and to make sure that the whole area has been covered.

- The whole procedure takes about 2 hours. This includes preparing for your scan, carrying out the scan and checking your images. You will be able to drive yourself home.
- If you are coming for a **brain scan**, you may need to wait slightly longer for your images to be checked. **There is a possibility that you may not be able to drive home, so please bring someone with you who can drive.**
- Sometimes the special drink may not be needed. In this case, the procedure will be shorter, usually less than 1 hour.
- The radiologist will send a report of your scan to the consultant who referred you. This will take approximately 1 week.

If you have any questions please telephone us on **0161 446 3884**.

Is the test safe?

CT scanners use more radiation than simple X-rays to give the doctor more information. We think the benefits of having this scan outweigh the risks of exposure to radiation. This is because the information obtained from the scan will contribute to your treatment.

As with all medication, a small number of people may be allergic to the contrast injection. Tell the radiographer if you have any allergies.

If there is any possibility that you may be pregnant please contact the department on **0161 446 3884**.

What is the benefit of a CT scan?

A CT scan is often the best way to identify abnormalities in the organs and tissues of the body. The scan may also show what sort of condition is causing them, for example, cancer, infection or previous injury.

Are there any alternatives to a CT scan?

There are other scans which can be done instead of a CT scan but they may not be as useful in patients with your condition. These include MRI (magnetic resonance imaging using a powerful magnet) and US (ultrasound scans using sound waves).

What happens if I decide not to have a CT scan?

If you decide not to have a CT scan then an alternative scan such as a MRI or US scan may be needed. The decision to use an alternative scan is usually made by the doctors looking after you together with the radiologists.

What if I can't keep my CT appointment?

If you can't keep your appointment, please contact the department straight away to minimise any delays.

If you are admitted to hospital before your appointment, please tell the ward staff that you have a CT appointment booked.

If you do not attend for your CT appointment, we will not send you another appointment automatically. Your request will be returned to the referring consultant to determine the reason for non-attendance.

If you have any questions please phone us on **0161 446 3884**.

For your CT scan you need to come to department 11.

On arrival please tell staff if you need assistance with mobility.

Wheelchairs are available at the main entrance to The Christie and the Palatine Road entrance.

Easy read guides to having a CT scan are available. Please ask the staff.

Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice

The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658

Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Visit the Cancer Information Centre

The Christie at Withington **0161 446 8100**

The Christie at Oldham **0161 918 7745**

The Christie at Salford **0161 918 7804**

Open Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm.

Opening times can vary, please ring to check
before making a special journey.

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The Christie Patient Information Service
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