

Computerised tomography (CT)

A CT (computed tomography) scan is a type of diagnostic imaging test that uses X-rays and computer technology to create detailed images of the inside of your body. It is commonly used to diagnose a variety of medical conditions, such as bone fractures, tumours, and internal injuries.

At your appointment, you will be asked to lie down on a table that moves through a large, doughnut-shaped scanner. You may be asked to change into a hospital gown, and you will need to remove any metal objects, such as jewellery or belts, that could interfere with the scan.

During the scan, a series of X-ray images will be taken from different angles, and a computer will use these images to create a 3D image of the area being scanned. You will need to lie still during the scan, as movement can blur the images.

In some cases, a contrast dye may be used to help highlight certain areas of the body on the CT scan. The contrast may be given to you orally, through an IV, or through a rectal enema, depending on the area of the body being scanned.

The CT scan typically takes between 10 to 30 minutes to complete, depending on the area of the body being scanned. After the scan, you will be able to resume your normal activities immediately, unless your healthcare provider instructs otherwise.

It is important to follow any instructions provided by your healthcare provider before the test, such as fasting or avoiding certain medications prior to the appointment. If you are pregnant or may be pregnant, you should also let your healthcare provider know, as some imaging tests may be harmful to a developing foetus.

They use a small amount of ionising radiation to create images of the inside of the body. While any exposure to ionising radiation carries some risk, the amount used in a typical scan is very low and generally considered safe. The risk of harm is generally outweighed by the benefits of obtaining an accurate diagnosis. However, it is important to discuss any concerns you may have about radiation exposure with your consultant or GP, especially if you have had multiple x-rays or other medical imaging exams in the past.

Overall, the CT scan is a safe and effective test that can provide valuable information about your health.