

Having a CT scan

X-Ray/Scans Department
Tel: 01271 322741

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

What is a CT scan?

A CT scan is an X-ray test which helps us to look at your body more accurately than is possible using ordinary X-rays. This test uses a high dose of X-rays but may help to avoid more unpleasant tests or even operations.

Why is it needed?

Your doctor will have explained to you why a CT scan is needed.

What does it involve?

The test is carried out in an X-ray room with a scanner. This looks rather like a huge polo mint with a table moving through it. It is important to lie still during the scan and to be as relaxed as possible, so that we can get the best pictures. Occasionally you may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds to make the pictures come out more clearly. The radiographer will tell you what you need to do and when to do it. Sometimes the doctor may decide that an injection of X-ray dye into the vein is needed to get better pictures. If so, we may need to ask some questions about your general health.

What about my general health?

- If you need regular medication for asthma, or are allergic to iodine or X-ray dye, please contact the X-ray/Scans department on 01271 322741 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 11am).
- If you have diabetes which requires treatment by tablet or injection, please telephone the X-ray/Scans Department on 01271 322741 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 11am)

How long will it take?

The actual scan only takes a few minutes, but you may be in the department for 1-2 hours if you need to have a special drink or X-ray dye (usually only necessary for patients having scans of the chest and/or abdomen).

What preparations are needed?

You may eat and drink normally prior to your appointment and you may take your normal tablets. If a scan has been booked for a child, then sometimes an anaesthetic may be required. Your child's hospital specialist will tell you if this is necessary.

What other preparations may be needed?

This depends on what part of the body is being examined. People having a scan of the abdomen or chest may be asked to drink some liquid beforehand. This will outline the stomach and upper bowel (small bowel) to improve the quality of the pictures. You may prefer to wear loose clothing without metallic fastenings or wiring to avoid changing, or to bring your own dressing gown, but gowns are provided if necessary.

How will I feel during the test?

If an injection is given, you may experience a sense of warmth.

What happens after the test?

If an injection has been given, you will be asked to stay in the department for 30 minutes afterwards and not to leave the hospital or drive for an hour following the procedure, to make sure there are no after effects.

You may eat and drink normally after the examination.

Are there any side/after effects?

The test uses X-rays. Therefore, if you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, the test should not be done.

If an injection of X-ray dye is given some people feel a sense of warmth and/or a metallic taste in the mouth. This is normal. The dye is colourless and is passed out normally in the urine.

Possible complications

Occasionally some people have an allergic reaction to the dye during the test. We have facilities in the department and on the wards to deal with this should it occur.

Follow up

The results of your CT scan will be sent to the referring doctor who will arrange follow up.

Further information

If you have any concerns or questions about your CT scan, please contact X-Ray/Scans Department on 01271 322741, 9am – 11am Monday to Friday.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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