

Patient information factsheet

Having a CT scan

We have given you this factsheet because you have an appointment for a CT scan. It explains what a CT scan is and what to expect at your appointment. Please make sure you read this information and follow the instructions carefully before your appointment. If you have any further questions, please speak to a member of your healthcare team who will be pleased to advise you.

What is a CT scan?

A computerised tomography (CT) scan is a medical imaging test that uses x-rays and computer software to produce detailed pictures of the inside of the body in cross sections (like slices).

Before your appointment

If your appointment is for a CT scan of your abdomen or pelvis, please do not eat for two hours before your scan. You may drink a little fluid if you are thirsty. If your appointment is for another area of your body, you may eat and drink normally.

You should continue to take your usual medicines.

Please try to arrive 15 minutes before your appointment. Please let us know if you are unable to attend your appointment.

If you require transport to your appointment, please contact us or your GP to arrange it for you.

All children attending the department must be supervised by a responsible adult at all times. Members of staff are unable to look after children for you.

University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust cannot accept responsibility for any loss or damage to personal property. Please leave any valuables at home.

Please let us know if:

- there is any possibility that you may be pregnant, as we may not be able to do the CT scan.
- you need an interpreter. We are not able to use family members or friends to interpret.

What to bring with you

You may wish to bring your own dressing gown and reading material.

If you are having a CT scan of your abdomen or pelvis, you may wish to bring some squash to flavour your contrast (dye) drink.

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On arrival

If your appointment is for a CT scan of your abdomen or pelvis, we may give you a jug of contrast to drink. This is to help make the images clearer. You will need to drink this over some time (30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on your scan).

We may need to give you an injection of contrast (dye). With your consent, we will place a cannula (a thin, plastic tube) into a vein in your arm, which we will inject contrast through during the scan. This makes certain tissues and blood vessels show up more clearly on the images.

We may ask you to change into a hospital gown. If so, you may wish to wear your dressing gown over the top before the scan.

We will go through a safety checklist with you before your CT scan.

During the scan

After the contrast injection or drink (if given), we will ask you to lie still on the scanner couch while the radiographer takes the CT images.

We may ask you to hold your breath for a few seconds at a time.

The examination will last approximately 20 minutes.

After the scan

If we have given you an injection or drink of contrast, we will ask you to wait in the department for 20 to 30 minutes after the scan. This is to make sure that you feel well before you leave.

You can eat normally after the scan. We also recommend drinking plenty of fluids.

Risks

- You will experience some exposure to radiation during the scan. The amount of radiation you will receive is always kept to the minimum amount needed and the radiation risk from the majority of scans is low.
- Some people may have a rare allergic reaction to the contrast (iomeprol). We will go through a safety checklist before starting the scan to check if you are at increased risk. A hot flush, feeling of passing urine (weeing) and metallic taste are common side effects of the contrast.

Results

The CT images that we take will be reviewed by a radiologist. We will then discuss the report with you at your follow-up outpatient appointment.

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/ct-scan

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/diagnosing/how-cancers-are-diagnosed/tests-and-scans

www.uhs.nhs.uk/Ourhospitals/SGH/Getting-here-and-parking/ParkingatSouthamptonGeneralHospital/ParkingatSGH.aspx

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Location of your appointment

CT scanner
Cross sectional imaging
B level
Wessex Neurological Centre
Southampton General Hospital
Tremona Road
Southampton
SO16 6YD

Contact us

We hope that this factsheet will answer some of the questions you may have, but if there is anything you do not understand or is not covered, please speak to a member of your healthcare team who will be happy to explain further.

If you have any questions before your appointment, please telephone the radiology department on **023 8120 6588**.

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **023 8120 4688**.

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds