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# CT Scans

## Imaging Department

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### Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email [pals@asph.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@asph.nhs.uk). If you remain concerned, PALS can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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### **Are there any side effects?**

The dye injection contains iodine. The injection can occasionally make you feel hot and uncomfortable. The feeling is very temporary and passes off after a few minutes. Very occasionally patients develop a rash which disappears within a few hours. The chance of this happening is less than 1 in 1000 cases.

The incidence of serious reaction is rare and is estimated to be substantially less than 1 in 10,000 cases. Our staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with such an emergency and equipment is on hand in the department.

### **Are there any disadvantages or risks?**

The scan does use x-rays. The dose received for a CT Scan is in the order of 6 years worth of background radiation which has no measurable effect. Generally the advantage gained of detecting and treating disease far outweighs any small theoretical risk of radiation exposure.

### **What is a CT Scan?**

A CT (computed tomography) scan is a special type of x-ray which takes pictures of the inside of the body using a narrow rotating beam of x-rays focused on a specific part of the body, together with sophisticated x-ray detectors and a computer. It is a non-invasive technique, and modern scanners use multiple rows of detectors (multi-slice or multi-detector CT) to rapidly scan and produce thin high-resolution cross-sectional images of the body. Most scans can be performed in less than a minute, and the information acquired is then processed by a computer to construct images which can be displayed in different planes, and sometimes as 3-dimensional images.

Any part of the body can be scanned, and the scanner displays a range of tissue densities from air in the lungs to dense calcification and bone. It can be used to examine the brain and spine, neck, chest, abdomen and pelvis and any bones. The more modern multi-detector scanners are useful to evaluate the heart and blood vessels.

### **Preparing for a CT Scan**

You may be asked not to eat anything for 3-4 hours before the scan if a contrast material (dye) is to be used. If the scan includes the abdomen or pelvis you may be asked to arrive about an hour before the scan in order to drink dilute dye or water.

**If you are a diabetic you should telephone the Diabetes Specialist Nurse for particular help and advice with the diet and preparation on 01932 722789**

You should tell us about any allergies that you may have to medicines/plasters/Latex. We will avoid using anything to which we know you are allergic. If you know you have an allergy to latex, you should inform us as soon as possible after you receive the appointment so that we can make the necessary arrangements. If you are pregnant, suffer from kidney disease or have any known allergies to food or drugs you should inform the radiographer as soon as possible after you receive the appointment. If you are treated with Metformin you will need to stop these tablets for one day before and 3 days after your scan.

The newer contrast agents are relatively safe but they contain iodine, and if you have a known allergy to iodine or have had a previous reaction to any contrast agent, you must inform the radiographer.

To inform the department of any of the above or discuss any concerns you may have call the CT Department on 01932 722401

Jewellery, metal buckles, buttons and fasteners can interfere with the scan and you will be asked to remove these from the area of the scan, or change into a gown. If you are having a scan of the brain, you will be asked to remove glasses, hearing aids, earrings, hairpins and any other metallic objects that may be in the path of the x-rays.

## **What does the scan involve?**

You will be positioned on the scanning table. The table moves through the scanner, which looks like a large doughnut. In some cases you may require an intravenous injection of contrast agent (dye) before or during the scan. If so, a small cannula will be inserted into a vein. During the injection, you may experience a warm sensation, which passes off within about 30 seconds, but you may not feel anything at all. You will be given instructions about breathing and swallowing during the scan, and it is important that you keep as still as possible to obtain the best images.

## **What happens after the Scan?**

After the scan, you will be able to eat and drink normally, and go about your normal activities.

You will pass the dye out of your body naturally in your urine. As the dye is colourless you will not notice.

The computer processes all the information and the radiographer will use this information to provide images which will be reported by a radiologist (X-Ray Doctor). The report will be sent to the doctor who referred you for the scan.