

CT Scan (Computed Tomography; CAT Scan)



Overview

This scan lets doctors see inside your body by taking x-ray images from many angles. These are combined to show clear cross-section slices of parts of your body. A CT scan shows much more than a typical x-ray. It can show cancer and other problems.

Preparation

Before you have a CT scan, you have to remove your glasses, jewelry, and other metal items. You may be given a gown to wear and medicine to relax you. You may be given a special dye to drink, or given the dye through an IV needle or other method. This helps the scanner see things in your body more clearly.

The Scan

To begin your scan, you lie on a table that slides into the CT scanner. The scanner is shaped like a ring. When it starts, you hear buzzing, clicking and whirring noises. The table slowly moves through the scanner. You must stay perfectly still so the machine can get a clear view. A scan usually takes about half an hour. If you move during the scan, the images will be blurry and it may need to be redone. A technician in a room next to you will watch you and the images as they are taken. The technician will talk to you through a speaker to let you know what is happening during your scan.

Review

When your CT scan is done, you can go home. Doctors will review the images and talk to you about them at a followup appointment.

