

# CT EDUCATION

CT scan, or CAT scan, is a medical test that helps doctors find and treat many different kinds of medical problems. The body part that is being looked at is given a safe dose of energy in order to make pictures of the inside of the body. The energy used for CT scanning is a form of x-rays. X-rays have been used for imaging for more than 100 years and are the most common and oldest kind of medical imaging. CT scanners use x-ray to show detailed, thin slices of the body. Some common uses for CT pictures are:

- Looking at internal structures (such as lungs, pelvis, abdominal organs and intestines) for cancer, infection or fluid collections
- Looking at the heart to check for disease
- Looking at brain tissue for tumor, bleed or stroke
- Looking for broken bones or broken bones that are healing
- Checking for objects in the body that do not belong
- Looking for damage or injury from accidents
- Looking at blood vessels for blockage, hardening, blood clot or injury
- Helping doctors during other tests
- Planning for treatments for tumors
- Getting ready for surgery



At UNM Hospitals, only trained, certified & licensed technologists are allowed to perform CT scans. Students work with licensed technologists.

CT scan of the chest

## GETTING READY FOR YOUR TEST

For your CT scan, you may be asked not to eat or drink anything for a few hours before your exam. You may be asked to take off your jewelry, glasses or other items from your body so they do not get in the way of the CT examination. You may have to change into a gown. You might have to come to the hospital about 1 hour before your test because you may need to drink medicine so that we get the best pictures for your doctor. You may need to have blood taken at the lab and the results sent to us before your CT scan. This blood is taken so we can check how your kidneys are working. We may give you x-ray dye or contrast through an IV, by mouth or by other methods. Your technologist will explain what is needed in order to get the best possible test. Before your test you will be asked to fill out some paperwork. Tell the technologist if you have questions before the pictures are taken. Please tell the technologist if you have diabetes or if you have had a problem with x-ray dye in the past.

## HOW IS THE TEST DONE ?

When it is time to start your test, you will be taken to a special room. You will be asked to lie down on the exam table. If it is needed, an IV might be started and you will be moved into the scan machine. The machine looks like a large "donut."



CT scan of the abdomen

We may need to use sandbags or cushions to help hold you in the right place. Some pictures will be taken and you will feel the table moving. You may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds. If an injection of dye is needed for your test, it is normal to feel warm all over the body, have a metallic taste in the mouth or think that you might pee on yourself. Don't worry, you are not going to do that, it is just a feeling. It is important you do not move. Do everything you are asked to do during your test. By doing this, you are helping yourself get the best possible pictures. Parents or caregivers may be asked to stay in the exam room and help keep children calm during the test. For space reasons, only one parent can come in the room during the test.

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER MY CT IS DONE?

A radiologist, a doctor specifically trained to read radiology exams, will evaluate your CT and send written results to your doctor. You will get your results from your doctor, not from the staff in Radiology.

## CT AND PREGNANCY

Female patients should always tell the technologist if they are pregnant. Some exams are not performed during pregnancy because x-rays can be harmful to the growing baby.