

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQs -

CT (CAT) SCAN

HOW DO CT SCANS DIFFER FROM MRI SCANS?

CT and MRI images sometimes look very similar, but the equipment used to perform the scan is different. CT uses ionizing radiation just as with a routine x-ray, while MRI uses a magnetic field. Depending on the clinical indications, one may be preferred over the other, or both may be desirable. CT scanners are faster and as a result, claustrophobia and movement are not as problematic as with the MRI scanner.

WHAT WILL I FEEL DURING THE SCAN?

CT scanning causes no pain, just as a routine x-ray is painless. If intravenous contrast is used, you may feel warm and flush and get a metallic taste in your mouth and you may feel like you are wetting yourself. These sensations normally disappear after a few minutes. Contrast agents are used to image tissues and structures that are not normally seen or not seen very well. Intravenous contrast agents are used to enhance organs and visualize blood vessels. Oral contrast agents are used to visualize the digestive tract.

WILL I NEED TO DRINK ANYTHING?

Most abdominal scans require the patient to drink an oral contrast mixture; this is not the same drink as in an x-ray of your stomach. This mixture is flavored and not at all unpleasant. Oral contrast highlights the stomach and upper intestine providing the radiologist with a detailed image for review.

WILL I GET THE RESULTS AFTER THE SCAN?

No. In most cases several hundred images are created during the scan, all of which will be reviewed by the radiologist. Previous examinations will also be reviewed and compared if applicable. The radiologist completes an in-depth review of all images and may at times consult with other physicians to provide an accurate report of your examination to your physician. The final report may take several days to complete. Upon completion it will be sent to your referring physician.

SHOULD I HAVE A CT SCAN IF I AM PREGNANT?

No. If you are pregnant or suspect that you may be, you should not have a CT scan or any type of x-ray examination. You should inform the technologist if you suspect you may be pregnant. Alternative arrangements may be made to meet your medical needs.

ARE THERE ANY INSTRUCTIONS I NEED TO FOLLOW AFTER THE SCAN?

If no contrast was used, there are no instructions and you may continue with your normal activities. If intravenous contrast or oral contrast is used, you will be instructed to drink water for the rest of the day to help eliminate the contrast.

WHAT HAPPENS WITH A CT BIOPSY?

A biopsy is the removal of a small piece of tissue or fluid for laboratory examination.

In a needle biopsy, you will feel a small pinch at the site of the biopsy. Local anesthesia is generally used to make the procedure pain free.

A needle biopsy removes tissue using a hollow tube called a syringe. A needle is passed through the syringe into the area of concern. The tissue is taken out using this needle. Needle biopsies are performed in Diagnostic Imaging using CT scan, ultrasound or fluoroscopy which guides the radiologist to the appropriate area.