

CT Scanning

Radiology Department



Patient information leaflet

This leaflet tells you about having a Computerised Tomography (CT) Scan. It explains what is involved and what the possible risks are. It is not intended to replace informed discussions between you and your clinician, but can act as a starting point for such talks. If you have any questions about the procedure, please ask the consultant who has referred you for the test or the department which is going to perform it.

The Radiology Department

The radiology department may also be called the X-ray or imaging department. It is the location in the hospital where radiological examinations of patients are carried out, using a range of equipment.

Who does what?

Appointment clerks will help you to make or change appointments.

Radiographers will perform the test. They will be able to answer some of your questions but will not be able to give you the results of your scan. They ensure the images taken are of high quality for a radiologist to provide a written report for your doctor.

Please be aware that we are a training department. A student radiographer may be present and will observe your examination if you are happy for them to do so.

Radiologists are specialist doctors who will interpret the images and report the scan for your consultant.

What is a CT scan?

Computerised Tomography (CT) is a special type of X-ray that uses a computer to create cross sectional (or slice-like) images of the body. The CT scanner is a large, open ended machine which is often likened to a polo mint.

Many CT examinations involve you having an iodine-based contrast medium (commonly called dye) injected into a vein to increase the quality of information obtained from the scan.

This dye is filtered from your blood stream by your kidneys. Your referring clinician may arrange for you to have a blood test prior to your scan to check your kidney function (if you have not already had one in the previous three months).

Does CT involve radiation?

Yes, but your doctor will have considered the possible risks and decided that the benefits to you outweigh any risk from the examination. If you have any queries about the need for this test or other alternative tests, please contact your referring clinician.

The amount of radiation used during a CT scan is more than an ordinary X-ray of the chest or body, but provides a great deal more information than an ordinary X-ray as it acquires very detailed images.

What preparation is required?

Please contact the CT department before your scan if you are:

- Pregnant
- Asthmatic
- Allergic to iodine (X-ray dye)
- Diabetic and taking metformin

Please continue to take all other medications as normal.

You may be given a gown to wear during the scan. This is to ensure that no metal objects, such as zips, buckles and bra fastenings are present in the area of the body being scanned which may affect the CT images.

You may be given or sent instructions which will relate to the part of the body you are having scanned. These instructions will be found on your appointment letter. Unless you have been told otherwise, you may eat or drink normally before and after your scan.

What happens when I arrive?

Please go to the reception desk to book in for your appointment. You will be given some labels and directed to the CT scanning waiting area. If there is a volunteer on duty, they will take your labels and show you where to change if necessary. You will be provided with a gown if you need to change for your scan. If there is no volunteer on duty the radiographers will be aware of your arrival and will come out to greet you in a short while.

If you need to change for your procedure you will be given a basket for your clothes and personal belongings. You may bring your belongings with you into the scanning room.

You may be asked to drink two cups of water before your scan.

What will happen during the scan?

You will be taken into the CT scanning room where your identity will be checked. The radiographer will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you might have. They may check some other details with you such as any allergies you might have. Your consent will be gained for the examination and you will be asked to lie down on the couch.

If the examination you are having requires an injection of dye, a cannula will be placed into a vein in your arm or hand. Through this, you will receive the injection of dye using an automatic injector. The injector is operated by the radiographers in the control room.

The couch will be moved slowly to position your body within the 'polo mint'. The radiographers will retire to the control room but they are able to hear you talk over the intercom and they will be able to see you throughout the scan. With modern CT scanners, you will only hear slight buzzing, clicking and whirring sounds as the machine acquires images. During the scan, the couch will move in and out of the machine a few times.

You may be asked to hold your breath during parts of the scan depending upon which body part you are having scanned. The breath holds are typically around 7 seconds.

If your scan requires an injection of the dye, the radiographers will tell you when this is about to start over a speaker. When the dye is injected it is common to experience a 'hot flush' sensation, particularly across the neck and chest. This feeling goes away quite quickly and is normal. Many people experience the hot sensation around the rest of the body. Some people also get a metallic taste in their mouth.

Will the scan be uncomfortable?

You will need to lie on your back for the scan. The radiographers will endeavour to make you comfortable for the short time that you are on the couch. You may be asked to bring your hands up above your head for the scan as this results in clearer images. Most people find that the process of scanning is relatively quick and is not uncomfortable.

How long will the procedure take?

The scanning process may take up to twenty minutes, however most scans are generally quicker than this. Sometimes there may be a delay in the department due to emergency cases which may result in you being seen later than your appointment time. We try to keep patients informed of any delays when we can.

Are there any side effects?

In rare cases, some people may have an allergic reaction to the dye. Most reactions are mild; radiographers are trained to recognise the signs of a reaction and to look after you. Doctors are also available should you start to feel more unwell.

A reaction may involve feelings of intense hot flushing, nausea, developing a rash or becoming breathless or wheezy. Severe reactions to the dye are extremely rare.

As with all radiographic examinations, the amount of exposure to radiation is kept to an absolute minimum.

What about after care?

Most patients will experience no adverse effects during or after the scan.

Following the scan, you can eat and drink normally. If you have an injection, it will not affect your ability to drive.

Is there an alternative examination?

It is possible that a different type of scan could be performed on the area of interest, but your CT scan referral has been vetted by a radiologist to ensure that this is the most appropriate examination for your problem or condition.

When will I get the results?

The scan will be formally reported after your visit and the findings sent to your referring doctor, which is normally within 14 days. During busy periods this may take longer. **If you have a date for your clinic appointment, please tell the radiographer so that she can ensure your results are ready for that day.**

Privacy and dignity

We promise to do everything we can to make you as comfortable as possible during your visit to the department. We hope that the information in this leaflet will answer any questions you may have but please feel free to contact us if you have any particular worries, questions or concerns.

Patient surveys

We value your opinion on our service and in order to deliver, maintain and improve our service we ask you to complete a short patient questionnaire survey found with the appointment letter. Completion of these surveys is entirely voluntary.

Questions and contacts

Following the examination, if you experience any problems please contact the CT scanning department between 08:30 and 17:00.

Outside these times please contact your GP.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about your scan, please telephone the CT department on:

Telephone: 01483 571122 ext 4151 or 4414

If you are unable to keep your appointment time please notify the CT scanning department as soon as possible.

Key reference source

- The Royal College of Radiologists
<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ct-scan/pages/introduction.aspx>

Useful websites

- www.nice.org.uk

For information on radiation:

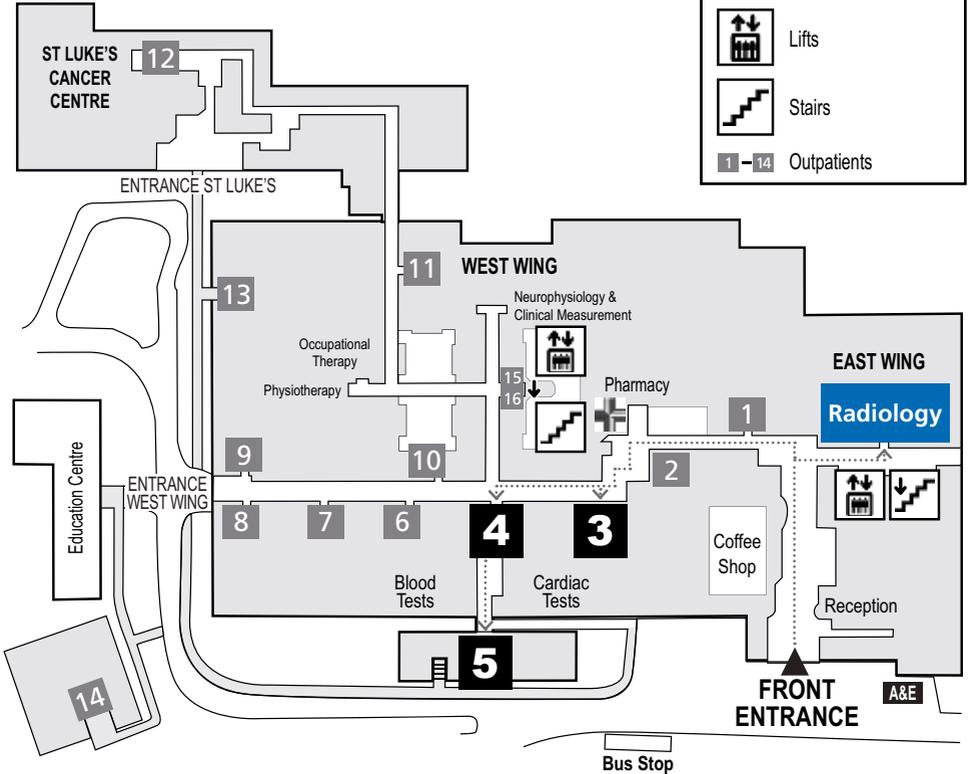
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ionising-radiation-from-medical-imaging-examinations-safety-advice/exposure-to-ionising-radiation-from-medical-imaging-safety-advice>

How to find the Radiology Department

Royal Surrey County Hospital map
Level B (Ground floor)

KEY

-  1 To clinics on next floor (above or below)
-  Lifts
-  Stairs
-  1-14 Outpatients



Radiology Department contact details

If you have any questions or would like to know more about this procedure, please telephone the CT Department on:

Telephone: 01483 464151 (Direct line)

Telephone: 01483 571122 **ext** 4151 / 4414

If you are unable to keep your appointment, please contact us as soon as possible.

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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