

UNITED HOSPITAL CENTER PATIENT EDUCATION

COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY OF THE BODY, CHEST OR EXTREMITY



Your physician has referred you to the Diagnostic Services Department at United Hospital Center for a Computed Axial Tomography (CT/CAT) scan. CT is an x-ray technique that uses a special scanner and computer to create cross-sectional images of parts of your body. Unlike standard x-rays which produce good images of the bony and dense structures of your body, CT can clearly show both bone and underlying soft tissue.

The technologist will help position you on a moveable CT table. Velcro bands may be used to help support your arms and as a reminder to hold still. The table moves for each scan. You simply relax and remain still as you pass through the opening of the large doughnut shaped ring. The technologist will monitor your exam from an adjoining room. During the exam, you may hear the sounds of gears and motors coming from the ring.

In most cases, intravenous contrast material will be used to highlight certain body parts. The technologist will insert a small needle into a vein in the hand or arm. This contrast medium may cause a warm sensation throughout your body or produce a funny taste in your mouth. These are both normal. If you have had a reaction to contrast medium before, or if you begin to itch, are short of breath, or experience any discomfort, tell the technologist **IMMEDIATELY**. Usually body CT scans are performed twice: once before contrast is injected and once after injection of contrast material.

If your CT is of the abdomen and/pelvis, you will be given oral contrast in addition to the intravenous contrast. This highlights your stomach and bowels. This contrast is mixed with Kool-Aide or another liquid and is given prior to the exam. If your CT scan includes your pelvis, you will have to drink the oral contrast the night before or at least six (6) hours before your exam time. This will enable the contrast to make its way to your lower bowels. In some cases contrast material may also be given rectally.

To get ready for your CT, follow the instructions given you by your nurse or doctor regarding special restrictions or medications. It is not necessary to fast prior to these exams, a light breakfast, lunch, or dinner is fine. Wear comfortable clothing, though you may be asked to wear a hospital gown.

LENGTH: Approximately 45 minutes

If you are pregnant, or think you might be, tell your doctor and the technologist **BEFORE** the exam.

DISCLAIMER: The content contained in this patient education is presented solely with the intent of providing public service information on health and health-related issues. This information is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult your physician or other qualified health provider prior to utilizing any of the information presented in this patient education. UHC makes no warranty, representation or guaranty as to the content, accuracy, timeliness or completeness of the information presented in this patient education or that the information may be relied upon for any reason.