

UNITED HOSPITAL CENTER PATIENT EDUCATION

COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY OF THE SPINE OR NECK



Your physician has referred you to the Diagnostic Services Department at United Hospital Center for a Computed Axial Tomography (Ct or CAT) scan. CT is an x-ray technique that uses a special scanner and computer to create cross-sectional images of your spine or neck. Unlike standard x-rays which produce images of your entire spine, the CT scanner takes detailed images of a particular section of your spine or neck. These images can show soft tissue such as the disks, spinal cord, vocal cords, and vessels, as well as the bones of the vertebra itself. The spine CT can be performed alone or in conjunction with a myelogram in which a contrast agent is injected into your spinal canal.

In either case, the technologist will 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 will move for each scan. You will pass through the opening of the large doughnut shaped ring, simply relax and remain still. The technologist will keep in close contact with you by way of an intercom and watch you through a glass window. During the exam, you may hear the sounds of gears and motors coming from the ring.

Very often, an x-ray dye will be injected through a vein and will be used to highlight certain body parts. The technologist will insert a small needle into the hand or arm. This x-ray dye 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 x-ray dye before, or if you begin to itch, are short of breath, or experience any discomfort, tell the technologist **IMMEDIATELY**.

It is not necessary to fast before these exams, unless your physician has ordered a myelogram to be included as part of this procedure. You will be asked to remove dentures when the upper neck is being examined.

LENGTH: Approximately 30 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.

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