

Spine CT Scans

Appointment Information

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Address: _____

Notes: _____

About

Spine CT scans are used to detect, or rule out, spinal column damage or abnormalities in patients. Spinal CT scans are also performed to:

- Evaluate the spine before and after surgery.
- Detect various types of tumors in the vertebral column, including those that have spread there from another area of the body (metastases).
- Help diagnose spinal pain. One of the most common causes of spinal pain that may be diagnosed by CT is a herniated intervertebral disc. Occasionally, this diagnosis is made using CT myelography.
- Guide diagnostic procedures such as the biopsy of a suspicious area to detect cancer, or the removal of fluid from a localized infection (abscess).
- Assess for congenital anomalies of the spine.
- Evaluate for spinal injury.

The technologist will begin your spine CT scan by positioning you on the CT examination table; usually having you lay flat on your back or less commonly, on your side or on your stomach. For children, the CT scanner technique will be adjusted to their size and the area of interest to reduce the radiation dose.

Next, the table will move quickly through the scanner to determine the correct starting position for the scans. Then, the table will move slowly through the machine as the actual CT scanning is performed.

The spinal CT scanning is usually completed within 30 minutes.

Preparations

To prepare for a spine CT scan, you should wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing. You may be given a gown to wear during the procedure.

Metal objects, including jewelry, eyeglasses, dentures and hairpins, may affect the CT images of your spine and should be left at home or removed prior to your exam. You may also be asked to remove hearing aids and removable dental work. Women will be asked to remove bras containing metal underwire. You may be asked to remove any piercings, if possible.

You should inform your physician of all medications you are taking and if you have any allergies. If you have a known allergy to contrast material, or "dye," your doctor may prescribe medications (usually a steroid) to reduce the risk of an allergic reaction. These medications generally need to be taken 12 hours prior to administration of contrast material.

Also inform your doctor of any recent illnesses or other medical conditions and whether you have a history of heart disease, asthma, diabetes, and kidney disease or thyroid problems. Any of these conditions may increase the risk of an unusual adverse effect.

In addition, women should always inform their radiologist and the CT technologist if there is any possibility that they may be pregnant.

If your infant or young child is having a spinal CT scan, there are measures that can be taken to ensure that the test will not be a cause of anxiety for either the child or parent.



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