

## **What Happens During a CT Scan?**

A CT scanner takes a series of X-rays. A computer then puts these X-ray images together to create detailed pictures of the head or neck. The procedure should take only about 15 - 30 minutes to complete your scan.

**You do not have to refrain from eating or drinking before your CT scan.**

**On the day of the procedure, you must remove jewelry and other metal objects. They can interfere with the quality of the CT scan. Please do not wear strong perfume.**

## **Contrast Dye CT Scans**

Contrast dye helps highlight some areas better on the images. For example, it can highlight and emphasize blood vessels and other areas. The dye is given through an IV in your arm or hand. Use of contrast dye isn't always necessary. It depends on what your doctor is looking for.

## **Preparation and Precautions to Consider**

The scanner table is very narrow. There is a weight limit for the scanner table. Be sure to tell your doctor if you're pregnant. X-rays of any kind are not recommended for pregnant women.

There are some extra precautions to be aware of if contrast dye will be used. For example, special measures must be taken for people on the diabetes medicine metformin (Glucophage). Be sure to let your doctor know if you take this drug. You may be asked to have your blood drawn prior to a contrasted CT scan to check your kidney function. **Also tell your doctor if you've ever suffered an adverse reaction to contrast dye.**

## **Radiation Exposure**

CT scans expose you to some radiation. Doctors generally agree that the risks are low compared to the potential risk of not being diagnosed with a dangerous health problem. The risk from a single scan is small, but the risk increases if you have many X-rays or CT scans over time. Newer scanners may expose you to less radiation than older models.

Tell your doctor if you're pregnant. Your doctor may be able to avoid exposing your baby to radiation by using other tests. These may include a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or ultrasound, which does not use radiation.

Discuss the risk of a CT scan with your doctor before the test so you can assess the potential risks and benefits for your medical condition.

## **Allergic Reaction to Contrast**

Tell your doctor before the scan if you've ever had an allergic reaction to contrast dye.

The contrast dye contains iodine. You may need to drink extra fluids after the test to help flush the iodine from the body.

In very rare cases, contrast dye can cause anaphylaxis, a whole-body allergic reaction that can be life-threatening. Notify the scanner operator immediately if you have trouble breathing.