

Having a CT colon scan (long preparation)

This leaflet explains what happens during a CT colon examination in the Radiology (X-ray) Department at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The examination is conducted by a diagnostic radiographer (X-ray professional).

Before the CT colon scan

Your consultant has referred you for a CT examination of your bowel. This scan requires a specific type of oral contrast (dye) to be drunk prior to attending the CT Department. In preparation for this scan, the oral contrast solution (Gastrografin) will be sent to you with full instructions in your appointment letter. It comes in a 20ml bottle and is designed to highlight your bowels during the scan.

If you are a woman of childbearing age, this scan should ideally be performed during days 1-10 of your menstrual cycle (day 1 being the start of your period); otherwise, within your 28 day cycle to ensure there is no possibility of you being pregnant. Please contact the Radiology Department prior to your appointment date if your appointment falls outside of those dates.

Instructions for taking the Gastrografin solution

It will need to be taken as four separate drinks.

To make each drink mix 5ml (1tsp) of Gastrografin with 300ml (half pint) of water.

These should be taken as follows:

- The first drink needs to be taken in the evening 2 days before the scan.
- The second drink needs to be taken in the morning on the day before the scan
- The third drink needs to be taken in the evening, the day before the scan
- The fourth drink needs to be taken on the morning of the scan.

On the day of the scan

Please arrive one hour before your appointment so we can give you further oral contrast to drink over the hour leading up your scan. The actual scan only takes a few minutes, but including the hour oral contrast prep when you arrive, placing the cannula and performing the scan, please expect to be in department for approximately 90 minutes.

Please bring your appointment letter with you (if you have it) for when you check in.

Either an RDA (radiographic assistant) or radiographer (X-ray practitioner) will greet you in the waiting area and provide you with any information that is relevant to your examination. The examination is conducted by the diagnostic radiographer.

Please attend alone, unless you have a social or clinical need.

What is a CT scan and why do I need one?

You are having a scan because a specialist hospital doctor (or, on occasions, your GP) has requested this examination based on any symptoms you may be experiencing or results of imaging / tests you may have had previously.

CT stands for Computerised Tomography. It uses X-rays and a computer to create detailed images of the inside of your body.

Are there any risks with this test?

You will always be asked on the day if you are allergic to iodine (the Intravenous contrast), but if you know you are allergic when you receive your appointment, please contact the radiology department on 0118 322 7991 to notify us.

This is a straightforward examination. As this is only a diagnostic procedure there are no expected risks associated with the scan. The scanner uses ionising radiation (x-rays) to produce the pictures. The scanner protocols are reviewed and optimised and the radiographers are trained to ensure the dose you receive is as low as practically possible.

What happens during the CT?

You will be asked to change into a hospital gown and lie flat on your back for the examination. The CT scanner consists of an X-ray tube that rotates around your body. You will usually be moved continuously through the scanner as it takes the pictures. The X-rays pass through your body and hit a series of detectors opposite the tube, which then generate the pictures via a complex computer.

The scan itself is painless and will usually take a few minutes, although the whole procedure will last approximately 10-20 minutes. However, please expect to be in the department for 90 minutes from arrival to the end of the scan. This allows for the contrast preparation, cannulation and the actual scan to be completed.

The only sensation felt during the scan is from the injection we give you (if appropriate). This intravenous iodine injection is designed to show up your internal organs and vessels. As this is injected, it is normal to feel a warm flush over your body and it can make you feel like you need the toilet because it fills the bladder quickly.

After the CT scan

Once the scan has finished, you will be free to get dressed and go home. There is no associated recovery period or lasting effects from this type of scan.

If you have the iodine injection, you are encouraged to drink plenty of fluids after the scan to help your kidneys filter and flush out the iodine injection.

Results

If you are having the CT scan for diagnostic reasons then a report of your examination will usually be sent to the doctor who has referred you. If this is a hospital specialist, then the specialist will contact your GP with the report.

Further information

www.nhs.uk/conditions/ct-scan/pages/introduction.aspx

Contacting us

Radiology Department Tel 0118 322 7991

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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Next review due: January 2025