About abdomen CT scans

An abdomen CT (computed tomography) scan is an x-ray scan using a special x-ray machine and computer. This scan creates pictures of thin slices or segments of the abdomen. Sometimes this is done together with pictures of your pelvis. Your doctor has ordered this scan to help diagnose a problem that you may be having.

For most abdomen CT scans, you will need to drink a medicine, called contrast, to coat your stomach and intestines before your scan. In some cases, a different contrast medicine will be injected through a small needle or an intravenous (IV) line. This medicine allows certain areas of your body to show up on the CT scan, such as veins and arteries. If you are having a study for kidney stones, contrast is not needed.

Preparing for the CT scan

- If you are not on any fluid restrictions from your doctor, you will need to increase the amount of water you drink the evening before your test. You should drink at least 5 (8-ounce) glasses of water or until your urine looks clear. This will help flush the contrast medicine from your body when the test is finished.
- Do not eat or drink anything except water for 4 hours before your scan.
- You should continue to drink water the day of your scan, so your urine continues to appear clear.
- You may take your normal medicines with water before the scan.
- If you have diabetes, talk to your doctor about any medicines you take and whether those medicines need changed before your CT scan.

Have questions about radiation?

At The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, we work hard to make sure you receive the lowest dose of radiation possible for your test. The radiation doses for our tests are lower than national averages and some of the lowest in the area. The dose you receive will be on the report from the radiologist.

Pregnant or allergic to contrast?

Tell the radiology technologist if you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant. Tell the radiology technologist if you have an allergy to contrast medicines.

Need to reschedule or have other questions?

If you are not able to keep your appointment, call radiology scheduling at 614-293-4333. Please call us with any other questions you have.
Day of your appointment

- **Arrive 1 hour before your appointment time.**
- Please bring a list of your medicines to your appointment. Include prescription and over-the-counter medicines, herbal products, and vitamins.
- Bring your photo ID and insurance card with you.
- After you arrive, a registered technologist will review your medical and surgical history with you.
- Before your scan, we may check your kidney function. We may also check your pregnancy status if you are a woman of childbearing age.
- You may be given a liquid medicine, called contrast, to drink 45 minutes before having your scan. It is very important to drink all of this solution. It will help show your stomach and intestines on the CT scan.

During your scan

- A technologist will help you onto the CT table and position you to be as comfortable as possible for the scan. The actual scan itself only takes about 10 minutes. The majority of your time with us will be spent drinking the contrast before you get on the CT table.
- You will be asked to hold your breath and to stay still while the pictures are taken.
- In most cases, contrast will be injected through a small needle or an intravenous (IV) line. You may get a warm feeling when the contrast material is injected. This is normal. Please tell the technologist if you have any unusual sensations or feelings.
- If you have a subcutaneous (under the skin) port that is power injectable, bring documentation with you that states your port is power injectable and tell your technologist.
- **Be prepared to be in the Radiology Department for 1 hour and 30 minutes for your scan.**

After your scan

- If you have no other tests scheduled, you will be able to go back to your normal diet and activities. No special care is needed.
- If you had contrast medicine, drink 8 (8-ounce) cups of liquid, such as, water, apple juice, or Sprite to flush the contrast medicine out of your body. Limit the amount of caffeine you drink.
- The radiologist, a doctor who specializes in radiology, will study your images very carefully and send a final report to your doctor.
- **If you have any problems or questions after your scan, call your doctor.**