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Having a Computerised Tomography (CT) scan

Imaging

A guide for patients and carers

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Your doctor has arranged for you to have a CT scan at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre NHS Foundation Trust (CCC).

This leaflet will explain the following:

- What is a CT scanner?
- Why do I need a CT scan?
- What is the preparation for a CT scan?
- What will happen during the scan?
- When will I get the results?



What is a CT scanner?

A CT scanner is an x-ray machine designed to take images of the body which can be used for diagnosing and assessing medical conditions. The CT table is comfortable and not enclosed (as shown in the picture in this leaflet) and the noise levels from the equipment are low.

Diagnostic radiographers will perform the CT scan and Health Care Assistants will assist during your visit.

Why do I need a CT scan?

A CT scan helps your doctor to diagnose and assess your condition and to assess your progress during and after treatment.

From this procedure you will receive a small amount of radiation, but we believe the risks from this are small compared to the benefits it brings in addressing your suspected condition.



What is the preparation for a CT Scan?

Please take all medicines as normal on the day of your scan.

If your scan includes the liver and abdomen, please do not eat for four hours before the scan. You can drink normally. Diabetic patients can eat very light food, if necessary, before attending.

If you are having a CT head scan, there is a possibility that you may not be able to drive home, so please bring someone with you who can drive.

Ladies, before performing the CT scan, it is very important that we know if you are breastfeeding or are (or think you may be) pregnant. If this is the case, please contact us in advance as it may be necessary to delay your appointment.

Your appointment letter will give your appointment time.

This is the time at which you should attend the Imaging department. The length of time you will be in the department will depend upon the area of your body being scanned.

If you are having a **brain scan**, you can expect to be on the scanner for about 15 minutes.

If you are having a **chest and/or liver scan**, you will need to undress and will be given a gown. If you wish to come in clothes with no metal underwires, zips or fasteners, you may be able to keep them on for the scan. Your scan will take about 20 minutes.

If you are having a scan to include your **abdomen and/or pelvis**, please do not eat for four hours before. You will be given a jug of fluid to drink before your scan which outlines your stomach and bowels.



If you wish to come in clothes with no metal zips, underwires or fasteners you may be able to keep them on for the scan. Otherwise, a gown will be provided. You will be given 30-45 minutes to have your drink and the scan will take about 20 minutes.

What will happen during the scan?

The radiographers will answer your questions and explain the procedure. You will be asked to lie on the scanner table and staff will make sure you are comfortable at all times.

The table will move you slowly through the CT scanner as it takes the images. The machine will make a noise but will not touch you and you will not feel anything.



For scans of the chest and abdomen, we will ask you to hold your breath for short periods so that the images are not blurred.

Most scans include an injection into a vein in your arm. This is a special fluid (“contrast agent”) that will highlight your organs and blood vessels on the CT scan. Rarely, some patients experience a mild reaction afterwards and we recommend that all patients who undergo this injection as part of a CT scan should remain within the hospital environment for one hour after the injection.

Driving is NOT recommended for at least **one hour** after the injection, so it is important to consider this when organising your transport to the hospital.

The CT scan itself has no side effects, so you will not feel any different.

When the CT scan is complete the radiographer will check the images for diagnostic quality before you leave the room.

When will I get the results?

After you leave the department, a radiologist (a doctor who specialises in interpreting CT images) will look at the CT images and write a report. Your consultant will normally receive the results within a week.





If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the department on 0151 556 5057

Please note that we scan patients who have been referred for investigation for a range of conditions, not only for cancer.

For general information you can contact the Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Helpline on 0151 556 5570.

How we produce our information

All of our leaflets are produced by staff at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre and this information is not sponsored or influenced in any way. Every effort is made to ensure that the information included in this leaflet is accurate and complete and we hope that it will add to any professional advice you have had. All our leaflets are evidence based where appropriate and they are regularly reviewed and updated. If you are concerned about your health in any way, you should consult your healthcare team.

We rely on a number of sources to gather evidence for our information. All of our information is in line with accepted national or international guidelines where possible. Where no guidelines exist, we rely on other reliable sources such as systematic reviews, published clinical trials data or a consensus review of experts. We also use medical textbooks, journals and government publications.

References for this leaflet can be obtained by telephoning 0151 556 5570.

If you need this leaflet in large print, Braille, audio or different language, please call 0151 556 5570.

If you have a comment, concern, compliment or complaint, please call 0151 556 5203.

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