

CT: Angiography Scan

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how a CT angiography scan works, how to prepare for it, how it is done, what to expect during the scan, and how to get your results.

What is CT angiography?

CT stands for *computed tomography*. A CT scan uses a special X-ray machine to take detailed pictures of the inside of your body. A CT *angiography* scan shows how blood flows through your blood vessels.

How does it work?

For your scan, you will lie on a table inside the CT machine. Many X-ray beams will be passed through your body as the X-ray tube revolves around you.

The machine will take pictures from many angles, forming cross-section images (*slices*) of the area. Your doctor will view these images on a computer.



During your scan, you will lie on a table inside the CT machine.

Contast

During the scan, you will receive an injection of *contrast* (X-ray dye) through an *intravenous* (IV) tube in your arm vein. Contrast makes tissues and blood vessels easy to see in the CT pictures.

How should I prepare?

- Keep taking your prescribed medicines as usual.
- *Women:* Tell your provider if you are pregnant.

On the Day of Your Scan

- It is OK to eat a light meal before your scan.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing.



A CT image of blood vessels

Before the Scan Begins

- *Women:* If there is any chance you may be pregnant, tell the CT technologist **before** the scan begins.
- Some items can affect the CT images. We may ask you to remove:
 - Any clothing with zippers or snaps
 - Hairpins, jewelry, glasses, hearing aids, and removable dental work
- We will place the IV tube into your arm vein. This will be done before you enter the scanning room.
- The CT technologist will ask you if you:
 - Are allergic to any medicines or iodine. Many types of contrast contain iodine. If you have ever had an allergic reaction to contrast, we will ask you to take medicine to prevent a reaction to the contrast before your scan.
 - Have asthma, diabetes, a heart problem, *multiple myeloma*, or kidney disease. These conditions may increase your risk of having a reaction to the contrast. For example, kidney disease makes it harder for your body to remove the contrast from your bloodstream.

Can a family member or friend stay with me during the scan?

CT scans use X-rays. Because of this, you may not have a family member or friend in the CT room during the scan.

How is the scan done?

- We will ask you to lie down on a narrow table. The table will be moved inside the CT machine.
- Your IV will be connected to a machine that will inject contrast at the right time.
- The technologist will then leave the room. You will be alone during the scan, but the technologist can see and hear you, and can speak to you at any time through an intercom.
- You must lie still while the table moves into the center of the scanner. You must also hold still when the scans are being done. Holding still during the scan results in the best images.
- First, a test picture will be taken to make sure you are in the best position for the scan. You will receive a small dose of contrast to see how long it takes for the contrast to reach the target area.

- Next, the *diagnostic* scan will be done. This will involve another injection of contrast.
- Afterward, the technologist will review the pictures. We may do more scans, if needed.
- Once enough pictures have been taken, you may leave. You can eat right away.
- You can expect to be in or near the CT room for 20 to 60 minutes. This includes setup time. The scan itself takes only a few seconds.

What will I feel during the scan?

- CT scans do not cause any pain. You may feel some discomfort from having to hold still during the scan.
- You may feel warm or flushed when the contrast is injected. You may also have a metallic taste in your mouth. These reactions are normal. They should ease within 1 to 2 minutes.
- Once in a while, a patient gets itching and hives for up to a few hours after receiving contrast. Tell us if this happens to you and we will give you medicine to treat the symptoms.
- If you start to feel light-headed or short of breath, tell us **right away**. You may be having an allergic reaction to the contrast. A doctor or nurse will be nearby during the scan to help, if needed.

What should I do after the scan?

It is important to drink a lot of fluids after your scan. This will help your kidneys flush the contrast from your body.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist skilled in reading CT scans will review and interpret your CT images. The radiologist will not talk with you about the results. The radiologist will send a detailed report to the provider who referred you for the scan. Your own provider will talk with you about the results of your scan.

You may also read your results on your MyChart page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

You and your provider will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- UW Roosevelt Radiology: 206.598.6868
- Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105
- UWMC - Northwest Imaging Services CT: 206.668.2061