

CT: Neck Scan

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how a CT scan of the neck works, how to prepare, what to expect, and how to get your results.

What is a CT neck scan?

CT stands for *computed tomography*. A CT scan uses a special X-ray machine to take detailed pictures of organs and tissues inside the body. CT scans of the neck provide more details on neck injuries, tumors, and other diseases than other types of X-ray. CT scans also show bone, soft tissues, and blood vessels.

How does it work?

During the scan, you will lie 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 your neck. Your doctor will review the pictures on a computer.



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

Contrast

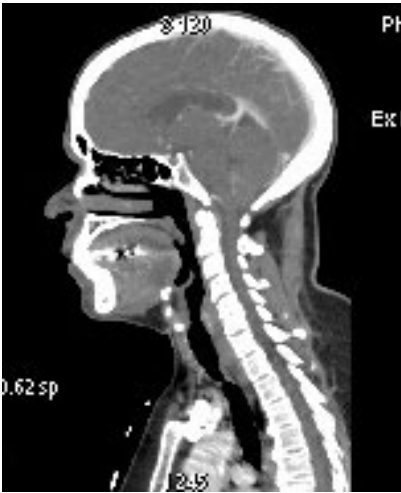
You might receive *contrast* (X-ray dye) during your scan. Contrast makes tissues and blood vessels easier to see in the CT images.

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 the neck

Before the Scan

- *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

If You Will Receive Contrast

- If you will have contrast for your scan, we will place a small *intravenous* (IV) tube into your arm vein. This will be done before you enter the scanning room.
- Before your scan, 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 exam.
- For young patients, a parent may be able to stay in the room with their child to help lessen fear and give comfort. The parent must wear a lead apron to limit exposure to the radiation used in the scan.

How is the scan done?

- The CT technologist will help you get into position on the CT table. We will use soft straps or tape to help keep your neck in the proper position.
- The technologist will then leave the room. You will be alone in the room during the scan, but the technologist can see, hear, and speak with you through an intercom at all times.

- You must hold still while the table is moved 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.
- For the first few scans, the table will move quickly through the scanner. These first scans check the correct starting position. The table will move more slowly for the rest of the scans.
- If you are having contrast, it will be given to you through your IV.
- A CT neck scan can take up to 15 minutes. We will check the images for quality before you leave. If needed, we will take more scans.

What will I feel during the scan?

- CT scans do not cause pain. But, you may feel some discomfort from lying still on the scan table.
- If contrast is used:
 - You may feel warm or flushed during the injection. You may also notice a metallic taste in your mouth. These reactions are normal. They should go away 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. A doctor or nurse will be nearby during the scan to help, if needed.

What should I do after the scan?

If you had contrast for the scan, drink lots of fluids to help your kidneys flush the contrast from your body.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist skilled in reading CTs will review and interpret your 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