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Computed tomography

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide patients with information about computed tomography (CT) scans and how to prepare for them.

General information

CT scans are performed at the Ravi 18 block C of*Aktsiaselts Ida-Tallinna Keskhaigla* or at the Asula põik 5 block X of the Magdaleena unit based on a doctor's referral. Your doctor will register you for the scan or you can register yourself by calling **+372 620 7200.** If you are unable to come at the agreed time, please notify us as soon as possible by calling the same number.

What is computed tomography?

Computed tomography is a method that uses a combination of X-ray and computer technology to image the human body. A CT scan is much more detailed than an X-ray, allowing for layered and three-dimensional images of the human body. Since the amount of radiation used in the scan is higher than in a standard X-ray, it is only performed if there is a medically important indication. Depending on the diagnosis, it may be necessary to use a contrast agent during the scan to better visualise the structure of the organs. For this, a venous cannula is placed in your arm, through which a contrast agent containing iodine is injected. If necessary, you will be asked to drink an iodine-containing contrast agent before the scan so that your stomach and intestines can be better evaluated during the scan.

Contraindications

If you are pregnant or if you suspect pregnancy, be sure to notifythe referring doctor and the radiology technician at the CT office. During pregnancy, a CT scan is only allowed in cases of extreme urgency.

For technical reasons, a contraindication may be a body weight of over 210 kg or a peculiar body shape.

Contraindications to a CT scan with contrast agent are:

- hypersensitivity to iodine-containing contrast agent – after the contrast agent is injected into a vein, a hypersensitivity reaction may occur, which may manifest itself as skin rash, itching, nausea, vomiting, or difficulty breathing
- renal failure

If you have a history of reactions to iodine-containing contrast agent, inform the referring doctor and the staff at the CT office.

Preparing for the examination

Since metal objects distort the image during a CT scan, they should be avoided in the area being examined.

When coming to the scan, keep the following in mind:

- wear something light and comfortable that is easy to remove when needed

avoid clothing with metal buttons, zippers, hooks, etc.

- if necessary, remove all metal objects such as jewellery and watches, as well as belts and hair clips.

Course of the examination

The CT scan lasts between 10 and 30 minutes, during which time you lie calmly and still on the examination table, which moves along with you. If necessary, a venous cannula is placed in your arm, through which a contrast agent containing iodine is injected. During the injection of the contrast agent, you may feel hot and have a metallic taste in your mouth, which will pass within a few minutes. Sometimes you will be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds during the scan. A radiology technician will monitor you through a camera and a window throughout the scan.

After the examination

- You can return to your daily activities immediately after the scan.
- The contrast agent does not affect your reaction time or attention.
- Breastfeeding mothers can continue to breastfeed.
- After a scan with contrast agent, you must drink plenty of fluids on the same day

(preferably 1.5-2 litres of water) to help eliminate the contrast agent from your body faster.

- Delayed reactions to the contrast agent are uncommon (less than 1 case per 1000 patients).

If you suddenly feel worse after the scan, contact your doctor or emergency department immediately.

If you experience any of the following symptoms (late reactions to the contrast agent), go to the emergency department immediately or call an ambulance:

- decreased blood pressure
- increased heart rate
- breathing difficulties
- anxiety and confusion
- bluish lips

If you have diabetes, you should monitor yourself for possible kidney failure.

You should contact your doctor or family doctor immediately if you experience late reactions to the contrast agent in the days following the scan:

- muscle cramps at night
- swelling of the legs
- swelling around the eyes in the morning
- increased urinary frequency (especially at night)
- fatigue
- loss of appetite
- difficulty sleeping
- dry and itchy skin

Result of the examination

You will find out the results of the CT scan from your doctor. If you want to receive the results of the CT scan on a data carrier, you must pay for it separately. The price of the service is given on the price list of paid services of East Tallinn Central Hospital (https://www.itk.ee/patsiendile/tasuliste-teenuste-hinnakiri#1726).

Additional information

If you have any questions about the scan, you can get information from the radiological examinations helpline. You cannot register for a scan or receive information about the results of the scan through the helpline.

The helpline is open on weekdays from 08:00-16:00:

• telephone +372 666 5166

• e-mail radioloogiainfo [at] itk.ee

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