



CT Scan



What is a CT scan?

A CT (computed tomography) scan, sometimes called a “CAT scan,” is an X-ray done using special equipment and computers. The machine takes a series of detailed X-ray pictures, which provide a multidimensional look at a body part.

Checking in for your appointment

Arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment. Being late can affect other appointments and can delay your appointment.

Check in at the 4th floor registration desk inside the Whale entrance. After you complete registration, you will be directed to the Radiology reception area.

Upon arrival, females 12 years and older will be asked to provide a urine sample for pregnancy screening for certain CT scans.

If you will be late or have questions about testing, please call Radiology at 206-987-2089.

How long will the scan take?

Most CT scans take 10 minutes or less. However, if your child is scheduled with anesthesia, your visit can take up to 2 to 3 hours.

To Learn More

- Radiology
206-987-2089
- CT Room/Radiology nurse
206-987-2136
- Neurology Clinic
206-987-2079
- Hematology/Oncology Clinic
206-987-2106
- Neurodevelopmental Clinic
206-987-2210
- Neurosurgery Clinic and Office
206-987-2508
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

How is the CT scan done?

Your child will lie on a long, narrow table. The X-rays are taken as the table moves slowly through the middle of a large donut-shaped piece of equipment.

Some CT scans require a special X-ray contrast material, or “dye,” be given first. The contrast is given intravenously through an IV tube placed in a vein. Children who are having a CT scan of the abdomen (or stomach area) may also be asked to drink an oral contrast. In these cases you will need to arrive 2 hours prior to the exam time.

How do I prepare my child?

Children who are not being anesthetized must try to lie very still during the scan. There is no pain involved with the actual scan, although there may be some brief discomfort if an IV is needed for the contrast. If contrast is needed, we will instruct you not to give your child anything to eat or drink 4 hours before the scan.

Due to confidentiality issues, it is not possible for parents to observe the scanning procedure from the control area. You will be able to see your child during the scan from an outside window.

If your child becomes ill on the day of or prior to your visit, please call the scheduling coordinator. The scan may need to be rescheduled.

Will my child have anesthesia?

It depends on the age of the child, the type of scan being performed and the child's ability to hold still during the procedure. The scheduling coordinator will discuss this option with you at the time of scheduling. If your child is getting general anesthesia and will be asleep for the scan, you will need to allow 2 to 4 hours for the appointment. This includes the pre-anesthesia nurse visit and recovery time after the test.

If having anesthesia, your child can eat or drink:

- Solids, milk and formula up to 6 hours before your scheduled appointment
- Breast milk up to 4 hours before the appointment
- Clear liquids like apple juice (without pulp), 7-Up or water up to 2 hours before the appointment
- **Nothing** more by mouth 2 hours before the appointment. This includes items like gum and mints.

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers 206-987-2280 (TTY).

Does CT use radiation?

Yes, CT uses X-rays; therefore, a small amount of radiation is given to the patient.

At Seattle Children's, we are experts in the special needs of your growing child. We understand that radiation dose is a special concern for children. Therefore the CT staff and radiologists at Children's have developed CT imaging protocols tailored to each patient's age, weight, and diagnostic task to minimize exposure. These techniques balance the radiation output needed to provide appropriate quality diagnostic images while using the lowest dose possible to do so. We also carefully screen requests for appropriateness and alternative methods of imaging. If you have questions regarding the necessity of your CT exam, please contact the ordering physician or contact the CT clinic to help answer your concerns.

When will the results be available?

The results of the scan are ready for your child's doctor within 24 hours. Please contact the doctor directly for the results.