



Computerized Tomography (CT)

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information. If you have any additional questions, please speak with the office nurse at (813) 262-1330.

What is computerized tomography?

Computer Tomography, also called a CT Scan, is a series of X-Rays processed through a computer that shows detailed images of the internal structures of the body. During the test your child will lie on a table that is attached to the CT scanner, which is a large doughnut-shaped machine. The CT scanner sends X-rays through the body area being studied. Each rotation of the scanner provides a picture of a thin slice of the area. All of the pictures are saved as a group on a computer. In some cases, a dye called contrast material may be used. It may be put in a vein (IV) in your child's arm to see those areas better.

Are there any Risks?

- Radiation in general is a risk. However, the amount of radiation used is the smallest amount possible to get the best pictures.
- If your child gets contrast, there is a small chance of an allergic reaction. This can include hives, itching, sneezing, and trouble breathing or other serious problems. Your child's technologist or doctor will discuss the risks of contrast with you before you are asked to give permission (sign consent) for the contrast.
- If your child receives sedation, your child's nurse or doctor will discuss the risks with you before you are asked to give permission for the sedation.
- The parent or legal guardian must be present to give permission for the procedure and the use of contrast or sedation.

What happens after the test?

- The Technologist or nurse will give you any special instructions and let you know when your child may leave.
- If your child is sedated, (s)he will need to stay until (s)he is awake. This may take up to 1 hour for recovery.
- After the test, your child may eat or drink as usual, unless your child's doctor tells you not to feed him/her.
- If I.V. contrast was given, it will leave your child's body through the urine within 24 - 48 hours after the test. The color of the urine should remain normal.

When do I get the results?

- The Radiologist will review the pictures and send a report to your child's doctor within 2 days.
- Our office may contact you with the preliminary test results in two to three business days. The details of the test will be discussed at your follow up appointment.

How should I prepare my child?

Babies

- Although you cannot explain the test to your baby, you can help him/her feel more secure during the test if you:
- Bring a special blanket, toy or pacifier.
- Comfort him/her with your presence and voice.
- Bring along a bottle of juice or formula to feed him/her **after** the test is done.

Toddlers and preschool-age children

- Young children can become anxious about having a test done, so the best time to talk with your child is right before the test.
- On the day of the test, tell your child that (s)he will be having some “pictures” taken, so his/her doctor can help him/her feel better.
- Use simple words and be honest.
- Let your child know that you will stay with him/her as much as possible during the test.
- When you come to the hospital, bring a favorite book, toy or blanket.
- You may also bring along a snack for **after** the test.

School-age children

- School-age children have good imaginations and may frighten themselves by imagining something much worse than the actual test.
- One or two days before the test, tell your child that (s)he is going to the hospital to have some “pictures” taken of his/her body.
- Use simple words. Be honest with your child and explain exactly what will happen.
- Let your child know that you will stay with him/her as much as possible during the test.
- When you come to the hospital, bring along a favorite videotape, book, toy or game.
- You may also bring along a snack for **after** the test.

Adapted from Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta’s teaching sheet on Computerized Tomography