**CT SCAN FAQs**

*What is a CT Scan?*

A CT (Computerised Tomography) scan is another type of x-ray which uses ionising radiation to take images of the human body. They pass through the body to create cross-sectional images as you move through the scanner.

*What is the difference between a CT and a CAT Scan?*

Nothing, they are the same! A CAT (Computed Axial Tomography) Scan is the old name for a CT Scan, before machines were equipped to take images in more than one plane.

*Are CTs safe?*

The doctor who has requested your CT scan has done so with the knowledge that the benefits of finding a diagnosis outweigh any harm from the small doses of radiation used. The medical imaging technologist who performs your x-rays is highly trained in the ‘ALARA principle’, which stands for ‘as low as reasonably achievable’. This means the lowest radiation dose possible will be used in order to provide diagnostic images for our radiologist to review.

More information on ionising radiation and health can be found here:

<http://www.arpansa.gov.au/radiationprotection/Factsheets/is_ionising.cfm>

*Why does the technologist leave the room?*

The medical imaging technologist operates the CT scanner from behind a console located in the room. This is shielded by lead which blocks x-rays, as the cumulative dose of radiation to the technologist who performs multiple scans a day over multiple years of their career would be harmful.

*What if I’m pregnant?*

If you are pregnant or think you might be please advise your doctor and the medical imaging technologist before your CT scan. There is risk of radiation damage to the developing foetus and so an alternative test may be recommended.

*Do I need to get changed?*

In general, you undress whatever part of your body needs examination and will be given a gown to change into as necessary. Depending on the area you are having scanned you may want to wear loose, comfortable clothing which is easy to move around in. You may also be asked to remove jewellery, glasses and other metallic items so they do not show up on the CT scan.

*Do I need to drink liquid before my scan? Why?*

CT scans of the abdomen and pelvis may require you to drink an oral contrast liquid, used to highlight the stomach and bowel. This contrast is relatively safe and not radioactive. You will be asked to begin drinking one hour before your scan to allow the liquid time to pass through your digestive tract.

*Do I need an injection of contrast dye during my scan? Why?*

There are many CT scans which may require you to have an injection of a contrast dye, including scans of the brain, neck, chest, abdomen, pelvis and kidneys. The dye is used to assist the radiologist to look at parts of your body such as blood vessels and organs.

The injection of contrast is given through a fine needle or cannula placed in your arm just before the images are taken. This injection may give you a ‘hot flush’ sensation, a metallic taste in your mouth and a feeling of needing to go to the toilet. These sensations usually last for less than a minute.

*Is the contrast dye safe?*

At the time of booking you may be asked for medical history such as allergies, diabetes and blood test results to check it is safe for you to have the dye. The medical imaging technologist will prepare you for this injection and go through a consent form and any questions you may have when you are taken through for your CT scan. Although it is called a ‘dye’ the contrast is clear, and not radioactive.

*What happens after I’ve had the contrast dye?*

There are no known long term side effects. You may be encouraged to drink plenty of fluids to help ‘flush’ the dye through your system and are able to eat and drink as normal following your scan.

*Do I need to fast from food for my CT scan? Why?*

You may be asked to fast from food (nothing to eat) for 4-6 hours prior to having your CT scan. It is preferable to have an empty stomach for CT scans which require the contrast dye injection to help make side effects more tolerable.

*Can I still take my medication before my scan?*

Yes, please continue taking any medication which has been prescribed by your doctor unless advised otherwise.

*How long will it take?*

Most examinations take less than 15 minutes. If you are required to have the contrast dye injection your examination will take approximately 30 minutes.

*How much will it cost?*

All CT scans at Radius are bulk-billed (no cost). Some exceptions do apply, however all potential fees associated with a referred exam will be discussed with you prior to confirming a booking.

*Can I use my private health insurance?*

Generally speaking, private medical imaging procedures are only covered if you are an inpatient in a private hospital. Please check with your private health provider, as different policies offer different levels of cover.

*Can I bring a relative or friend to my CT appointment?*

Yes, however due to safety reasons they will be asked to remain outside for the duration of your scan.

*What happens to my results?*

Your CT scan is reviewed by our radiologist who is the specialist doctor onsite at Radius. A report is made based on any findings and sent to your doctor within 24-48 hours. Urgent CT scans may be able to be reviewed at the time of your appointment.