

UnityPoint Health - Finley Hospital Radiology Patient/Family Information
CT Scan – Abdomen & Pelvis

What is an Abdomen and /or Pelvis CT Scan?

A CT – computed tomography – or CAT scan is a valuable procedure which combines x-ray and computer technology to make a clear picture of the organs, bones and tissues inside your body.

The CT exam involves tiny x-ray pictures, called ‘slices’, taken in a circular movement around the body. The computer pulls the slices together and puts them on a video monitor for a radiologist – a doctor who specializes in radiologic medicine. The image represents a cross-section of the particular area and can provide a ‘view’ that may not be visible on a regular x-ray.

Special Note

Before the exam, please tell your doctor if you are or think you may be pregnant or are nursing.

Please inform your physician if you have had any recent barium exams.

It is also important to inform your physician and the CT technologist if you have any allergies or have had a reaction to x-ray dye in the past or have a history of multiple myeloma.

Preparation

You should not eat any solid food four (4) hours before your exam. No liquids two (2) hours before your exam. You may, however, drink clear liquids, including water, tea, clear gelatin, lemon-lime soda, orange or grape punch (not juice) and broth. If you are on any medications, take them prior to your test with a small sip of water. Your doctor may have other specific instructions for you.

Please bring your medication list with you to your exam.

If you are 60 or older, have diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease or have undergone an exam within the previous seven days where contrast material (x-ray dye) was injected into your body, you will need to have a blood test before this procedure to check for kidney function.

What Happens During the Test?

Upon your arrival, you will be asked to drink the first of three bottles of a special contrast material. This is a dilute barium mixture and will help to identify your internal structures on the images. Also during this time an IV may be started in the vein of your arm if x-ray dye will be used for the exam (this is determined by your physician and also by the reason for the exam).

After 30 minutes you will drink a second bottle of the contrast material. Just before the exam, the third bottle of contrast material will be drunk. It is also an option to stop into our department and pick up the contrast material to drink before arriving (only two bottles of contrast material need to be drunk before arriving, the third bottle should be given to you by the technologist doing the exam).

You may be asked to undress (completely, in some cases) and wear a hospital gown for the images. You will lie on your back on a table with your arms above your head. The table will be moved into the CT machine or scanner where the images will be taken. Except for the movement of table, you will not feel anything.

You must remain as still as possible during this procedure, and you'll be asked to hold your breath for 10 to 15 seconds as each scan is taken. It's important to do this for each scan. It is during this time that an x-ray dye may be injected through the IV. You may feel warm and flushed for a few minutes, which is very normal. However, if you should feel itchy, short of breath or uncomfortable, please tell the CT technologist.

After the Exam

- You may go back to your regular diet after the exam, unless otherwise directed by your doctor.
- If you received the x-ray dye through an IV, you should drink plenty of fluids along with resuming a regular diet. The dye will go out through your urine and you will not be able to see it.
- If you drank oral contrast material for your exam, you may experience loose stools for a day or two after the exam.

When Will I Know the Results?

The radiologist will review and interpret the scan shortly after the exam is completed. A written report will be sent to your doctor. Your doctor will discuss these results with you.

Please allow your physician the time needed to review these results.

Name: _____

Exam Date/Time: _____