



X-Plain *Computed Axial Tomography (CAT)* *Scan*

Reference Summary

Introduction

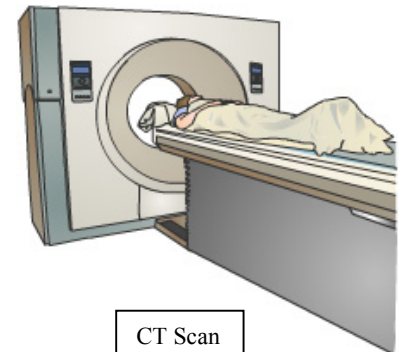
A Computed Axial Tomography Scan or CAT scan is a test that provides very clear pictures of structures inside the body. Doctors may recommend a CAT scan to help in diagnosing various diseases.

If your doctor recommends a CAT scan, the decision whether or not to have this scan is also yours. This reference summary reviews the benefits and risks of this scan.

Test

A CAT scan uses x-ray technology and sophisticated computers to come up with the final pictures. The CAT scan machine looks like a giant donut and the “gantry” is its hole.

You will be asked to lie down so that the part of your body to be scanned will be placed inside the gantry of the machine. It is important that you remain still during the scanning. This allows for sharper pictures. The test takes from a few minutes to approximately half an hour. CAT scan technologists sit in the next room and are able to see you through a glass. They are also able to hear you at all times and are able to talk to you. If you have any questions, be sure to ask them. They will be more than glad to help you.



Sometimes a dye needs to be given through a vein to help the doctor better visualize structures inside the body. This dye is relatively safe. It is an iodine-based dye. However, some people have allergies to the iodine dye used in this test. Make sure to tell your doctor about your allergies and about all reactions you may have had to any sort of dye used on you in the past. In some people, the dye can cause kidney failure, especially if the patient is taking Glucophage, a diabetic medication.

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X-rays are used during this procedure. The amount of radiation during this test is deemed safe. However, this amount could be dangerous for unborn children. It is therefore very important to make sure you are not pregnant before an elective radiological test. A pregnancy test can be done if you are not sure.

Summary

CAT scans can be helpful in detecting some problems in the body. Though it may take up to 30 minutes, you should lie very still to get the clearest pictures.

CAT scans are very safe. Risks and complications are very rare. Knowing about them will help you detect them early if they happen.



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