

Having a CT Cardiac Angiogram

Patient Information

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Author: CT Lead Radiographer
Department: Radiology
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Introduction

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about having a cardiac (heart) CT scan. It explains what will happen when you have the scan, the benefits, risks and alternatives.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or other member of staff in the CT department.

What is a cardiac CT scan?

A cardiac CT scan is a specialised scan using x-rays to look at your heart. A cardiac CT scan is also called CT coronary angiography. It can help your cardiologist (heart doctor) find the cause of your heart problem and the best treatment options for you.

A cardiac scan is helpful for patients:

- at risk of developing coronary disease
- who have unclear results from other tests, or
- who have had heart bypass surgery to check their grafts.

Do I need to tell the staff what tablets I take?

Yes - it is very important to tell the doctor or staff in the department what medication you take, before you have the scan. It is often useful to bring your repeat prescription on the day of the scan.

Will I be given any medications for the scan?

In order to get a good quality scan, your heart rate needs to be slow. Some people may have a slightly faster heart rate. If your heart rate is slightly fast, you may be given a tablet to slow it down (Beta blocker). This will be prescribed for you at your clinic appointment. **Please ensure that you take this medication as directed.** Failure to take the medication before arrival could mean that we are unable to complete the examination for you.

Patients prescribed Metoprolol

You will have been given 3 tablets. The day before your appointment you should take one tablet in the morning and one tablet in the evening. Take the third tablet on the morning of your appointment, before leaving home.

Patients prescribed Ivabradine

You will have been given 7 tablets. You need to start taking these tablets 3 days before your appointment. Take one tablet in the morning and one tablet in the evening for 3 days. Take the 7th tablet on the morning of your appointment, before leaving home.

Please do not worry if you have not been given any medication at your clinic appointment. Please continue to take any beta blockers that you have previously been prescribed.

On the day of your appointment

Please do not drink anything containing caffeine - e.g. tea, coffee, cola and hot chocolate - on the morning of your scan.

You may eat normally and drink plenty of water, fruit juice or herbal tea freely.

The procedure

You may be asked to change into a gown. One of the radiographers will explain the procedure to you and ask you some questions about your condition.

This scan can only be performed when your heart rate is within a certain range. You may need further medication. Once your heart rate is settled, a cannula - a small plastic tube through which an injection is given - will be inserted into your arm.

A radiographer will then take you into the scan room and explain the procedure to you in more detail. You will be transferred to the scanner table and ECG leads will be attached to your chest. These are linked to the scanner and enable us to see images coinciding with your heart beat.

Before we start the scan, we will ask you to lie quietly for a few minutes to again settle your heart rate.

Your body is never totally enclosed and you will be able to communicate with the CT staff through an intercom system. The scanner couch can be lowered and patients with mobility problems will be offered assistance. During the scan we will give you an injection through the cannula of special fluid called contrast medium.

This shows up the blood vessels around the heart.

You need to lie very still while the scan is in progress and we will ask you to hold your breath for about 15 seconds during the scan. The actual scan time is approximately 30 minutes but you will need to allow at least two hours for this appointment.

Risks from the procedure

To minimise any risks you will be asked a series of questions before the scan.

A small number of patients suffer allergic type reactions to the contrast medium. If you have had an injection of contrast medium you will need to remain in the department for up to 30 minutes following your scan. Such reactions are usually minor and settle quite quickly without treatment. Although x-rays are used to produce the images, a CT scan is considered to be a very safe procedure. However, your doctor feels that any slight risk from the use of x-rays is outweighed by the information provided by the scan.

After your scan

There are no after effects from this examination but sometimes the x-ray dye can make you feel a little bit de-hydrated. To stop this happening to you please drink extra fluids following your scan, ideally equal to one cup of tea every hour for the next six hours, then you may eat normally. When the radiographer is happy with your images you may go home. You can normally drive home but we advise you to try and arrange for someone to pick you up.

CT Department
Radiology Department
Telephone 0151 676 5756

Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road,
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR
Telephone: 0151 426 1600

 /sthknhs  @sthk.nhs

www.sthk.nhs.uk