

## CT: Lung Cancer Screening

### *How to prepare and what to expect*

*This handout explains how a CT scan for lung cancer works. It includes how to prepare for the scan, what to expect, and how to get your results.*

### **What is CT lung cancer screening?**

CT stands for *computed tomography*. A CT scan uses a special X-ray machine to take detailed pictures of your body's organs and tissues. A CT that screens for lung cancer shows if you have any *nodules* (lumps) in your lungs that could lead to cancer. Your doctor scheduled this CT because finding lung cancer early gives us a better chance of treating and curing the disease.

### **Will I be exposed to radiation?**

All X-rays use a small amount of radiation to make the images. A screening CT uses a lower dose of radiation than regular CT scans. Talk with your doctor if you have concerns about the radiation involved. You can decide if the benefits of finding lung cancer early outweigh the risks from the low dose of radiation.

The amount of radiation used in a screening CT depends on a person's body size. For most people, the amount of radiation used in this screening CT is less than one third the amount used in a regular CT scan.

### **How does it work?**

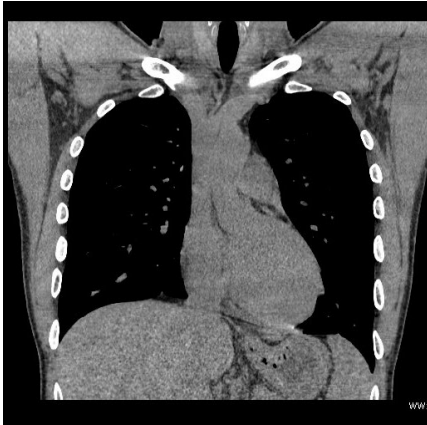
For the scan, you will lie on a table inside a tube in the CT machine. The table will move and the tube will revolve around you. The machine will take X-ray images of your lungs. Your doctor will view the images on a computer.



*You will lie on a table inside the CT machine during your scan.*

### **How do I prepare?**

- Keep taking your prescribed medicines as usual.
- *Women:* Tell your provider if you are pregnant.



A CT image of the chest

## On the Day of Your Scan

- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing on the day of your scan.
- Please remove jewelry and anything that has metal in it from your upper body. Metal can affect the quality of the images.
- *Women:* If there is any chance you may be pregnant, tell the CT technologist **before** the scan begins.
- CT scans use X-rays. Because of this, you may not have a family member or friend in the room during the scan.

## How is the scan done?

- The CT technologist will help you get into position on the CT table.
- The technologist will then leave the room. You will be alone in the room during the scan, but the technologist will be able to see, hear, and speak with you through an intercom at all times.
- For the first few scans, the table will move quickly through the CT machine. These first scans check the correct starting position. The table will move more slowly for the rest of the scans.
- The technologist will ask you to hold your breath for short times when the images are taken. This will help us get the best images. Between scans, you can breathe as usual.
- This scan can take up to 10 minutes. We will check the quality of the images before you leave. We may ask to take more images, if needed.

## What will I feel during the scan?

- CT scans do not cause any pain.
- You will need to hold your breath and hold very still when the technologist takes images.

## Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A *thoracic radiologist* who specializes in diagnosing lung disorders will review and interpret your CT images. The radiologist will not talk with you about the results. The radiologist will send a detailed report to your own provider, who will give you the results. Seattle Cancer Care Alliance will also send you a letter explaining your results.

You may also read your results on your MyChart page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

You and your provider will then decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- UW Roosevelt Radiology: 206.598.6868
- Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105
- UWMC - Northwest Imaging Services CT: 206.668.2061