

CT: Sinus-Screening Scan

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains a sinus-screening CT scan. It describes how it works, how to prepare for it, how it is done, what to expect during the scan, and how to get your results.

What is a sinus-screening CT scan?

A sinus-screening CT (*computed tomography*) scan uses a special X-ray machine to take detailed pictures of the sinuses. CT is useful because it can show many types of tissue in the same image. This includes bones, soft tissues, muscle, and blood vessels.

How does the scan work?

In a sinus-screening CT scan, many X-ray beams are passed through the sinuses. Special sensors measure the amount of radiation absorbed by different tissues.

During the scan, you will lie on a table inside the CT machine. The X-ray tube will revolve around you and take pictures from many angles, forming cross-section images (*slices*) of the area. Your doctor will review the pictures on a computer.

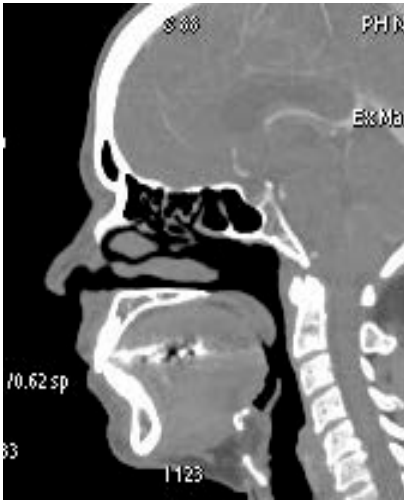
Contrast (X-ray dye) may be injected into your vein shortly before scanning begins. Contrast makes tissues and blood vessels easier to see in the CT pictures.

How do I prepare?

- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing on the day of your scan.
- It is OK to eat a light meal before your CT scan. Drink plenty of fluids on the day of your scan.
- Keep taking your regular medicines that your doctor prescribed.



For your CT scan, you will lie on a table inside the CT machine.



A CT image of the sinuses

Before the Scan Begins

- *Women:* Tell your doctor or CT technologist if there is any chance you are pregnant.
- We may ask you to remove hairpins, jewelry, eyeglasses, hearing aids, and any removable dental work that could cause problems with the images.
- If you will have contrast for your scan, we will place a small *intravenous* (IV) tube into your arm vein. This will be done before you enter the scanning room.

If You Will Receive Contrast

Before your scan, the CT technologist will ask you if you:

- Are allergic to any medicines or iodine. Many types of contrast contain iodine. If you have had an allergic reaction to contrast in the past, we will ask you to take medicine to prevent a reaction to the contrast before your scan.
- Have asthma, diabetes, a heart problem, multiple myeloma, or kidney disease. These health conditions may increase your risk of having a reaction to the contrast. For example, kidney disease makes it harder for your body to remove the contrast from your bloodstream.

Can a family member or friend stay with me during the scan?

- Because CT uses X-rays, you may not have a family member or friend in the CT room during the exam.
- For young patients, a parent may be able to stay in the room with their child to help reduce fear and provide comfort. The parent will need to wear a lead apron to limit exposure to the radiation used in the scan.

How is the scan done?

- The CT technologist will help you get into position on the CT table. Pillows will be used to help you stay in position during the scan.
- The technologist will then leave the room. You will be alone in the room during the scan, but the technologist can see, hear, and speak with you through an intercom at all times.
- You will lie still while the table moves into the center of the scanner. You will also need to hold still when the scans are being done. Holding still during the scan results in the best CT pictures.
- For the first few scans, the table will move quickly through the scanner. These first scans check the correct starting position. For the rest of the scans, the table will move more slowly through the scanner.

- If you are having contrast, it will be given to you through your IV at this time.
- A sinus-screening CT scan usually takes 5 to 30 minutes, including set-up time. The actual scan time is less than 30 seconds.
- When the scan is over, we may ask you to wait while we check the images for quality. A few more scans may be done, if needed.

What will I feel during the scan?

CT scanning does not cause any pain. You may feel some discomfort from needing to hold still during the scans.

If contrast is used, you may:

- Feel discomfort at the injection site
- Feel a warm, flushed sensation when the contrast is injected
- Have a metallic taste in your mouth

These reactions are normal. They go away within 1 to 2 minutes.

Allergic Reactions to Contrast

Once in a while, a patient gets itching and hives for up to a few hours after the injection of contrast. Tell us if this happens to you and we will give you medicine to treat the symptoms.

Tell us if you become lightheaded or short of breath. You may be having a more severe allergic reaction to the contrast. A doctor or nurse will be nearby during the scan, if needed.

What should I do after the scan?

If you had contrast for the scan, drink a lot of fluids to help your kidneys flush the contrast from your body.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist skilled in reading CT scans will review and interpret the CT images. The radiologist will not talk with you about the results. The radiologist will send a detailed report to your provider who referred you for the scan. Your own provider will talk with you about the results of your scan.

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

You and your provider will 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 Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- UW Roosevelt Radiology: 206.598.6868
- Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105