

CT Coronary Angiogram

INFORMATION SHEET

CTCA is a special scan using advanced CT technology to take images of the beating heart and the coronary arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle.

An injection of dye is given in a vein in the arm to highlight any blockages or narrowing in the coronary arteries. Disease of the arteries (coronary artery disease) can cause symptoms and a heart attack.

What preparation is required?

A slow heart rate gives the best images of the coronary arteries. Hence it is best to avoid caffeinated drinks for 24 hours prior to the procedure. These include coffee, tea, soft drinks and energy drinks. Decaffeinated tea and coffee also contain caffeine and should be avoided. If possible, strenuous exercise and smoking should also be avoided.

You may have your usual prescribed medications but please bring a list of your usual medications, and your inhaler if you use one.

It is best if someone can accompany you to your appointment.

What happens during my CTCA?

The radiographer will call you in, confirm your name and explain the procedure to you. You will be asked to change into a gown. The radiographer will go through your answers from your contrast (dye) injection questionnaire.

You will lie down on a bed and get comfortable. We will place sticky patches on your chest so that an ECG can monitor your heart during the scan. If your heart is beating too quickly, we may give you some medication to slow it down, usually a drug called a beta-blocker.

When your heart rate is slow enough, we will perform the scan after a spray of medication under your tongue called GTN spray. This opens up the arteries of the heart so they are better seen on the scan. This can cause a little dizziness or headache.

We will inject x-ray contrast (dye) into a vein in your arm during the scan and you will be required to hold your breath for about 10 seconds at a time. During the scan, you will be lying on the bed of the CT scanner and be moved into the scanner.

The scan itself will take around 10 minutes. However, we need to prepare you for the scan and observe you afterwards for a little while, so please allow up to 90 minutes in total.

What happens after the scan?

After the scans are completed, you will need to stay in the department for a short time for observation.

The CT Coronary Angiogram will be reported by our radiologists the same day, and the report will be sent to your doctor electronically.

Are there any risks of CT Coronary Angiogram?

All CT scans use x-rays, but the radiation dose given is as low as possible for the procedure, and the benefit of an accurate diagnosis far outweighs the risk.

You may feel light-headed or have a headache from the medication given to you during the examination. This should only be temporary.

There is a small risk of an allergic reaction to the x-ray contrast (dye). If you have a previous reaction or have reduced kidney function (renal failure), please let us know as you may need extra precautions.