

# Having a CT scan as part of the Symptoms of Concern (SOC) Pathway

## Introduction

Your general practitioner (GP) has referred you to the SOC Pathway to investigate your non-specific yet concerning symptoms. As part of this, you will be contacted by the SOC clinical navigator who will arrange an appointment for you to have a CT scan of your chest, abdomen and pelvis. Please note that in some cases, you may be seen in an outpatient clinic first before any investigations. The clinical navigator will be your link person through this service.

## What is a CT scan and why do I need one?

CT stands for Computerised Tomography. The CT scan uses X-rays and a computer to generate detailed, 'sliced' pictures of the inside of your body. This allows the consultant radiologist (doctor specialising in diagnostic imaging – X-rays and scans) to look in detail at the internal anatomy of your body in order to write the formal report.

**Please do not eat anything for one hour before your appointment. You may drink as normal. Continue to take any medication that you have been prescribed.**

## What happens during the CT?

The CT scanner consists of an X-ray tube that rotates around your body. You will lie on your back on a table that moves continuously through the scanner as it takes the pictures; you will be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds whilst the table moves through the scanner. The Radiographer will operate the scanner from the next room.

The scan itself is painless. The scan will take 10-20 minutes to complete, but can take up to an hour including preparation time. A contrast dye (commonly iodine) may be injected into a vein in your arm, so we will insert a cannula (flexible plastic tube) using a small needle. The cannula insertion may be done outside of the scanner room in preparation for your scan. This injection is designed to show up your internal organs and vessels on the image. As the contrast is injected, it is normal to feel a warm flush over your body. It can also give the sensation of needing the toilet.

## Are there any risks with this test?

As this is a straightforward diagnostic procedure, there are no expected risks associated with the scan. The scanner uses ionising radiation (X-rays) to produce the pictures. The guidelines followed for carrying out scans are reviewed regularly to ensure the procedure is as safe as possible and the radiographers are trained to ensure the radiation dose you receive is as low as practically possible.

In rare instances, some people may have an allergic reaction to the contrast dye that is used.

Prior to the scan, a CT safety checklist will be completed to discuss any safety concerns or issues. **If you are a diabetic on Metformin, you must tell the Radiographer before you have this injection. We will need to give you instructions about its use following the scan.** If you know you are allergic to the contrast dye, if you are pregnant or breast feeding, or if you weigh more than 140 kg (22 stone) please contact the Clinical Navigator on phone number or email address below.

### After the CT scan

Once the scan has finished, and the cannula has been removed you can go home. If you have the dye injection, you are encouraged to drink plenty of fluids after the scan to help your kidneys filter and flush dye out.

### Results

The results from your CT scan will usually be reviewed by the SOC Pathway doctor, who will review it alongside your clinical history and the results from the blood tests and other relevant investigations that have been arranged by your GP.

### Next steps

Depending on the results, there are a number of next steps or outcomes :

- The SOC Doctor may decide that further tests are required in order to make a diagnosis;
- You will get an appointment to attend a specialist clinic with a doctor or one of the SOC team, or;
- You will be referred back to your GP.

### Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Your safety and that of NHS staff is very important. To minimise your risks while ensuring you have the necessary investigations, clinic appointments may be via telephone, a face-to-face 'video' consultation or a hospital attendance.

If you have any Coronavirus symptoms (high temperature, new continuous cough, loss or change to sense of smell or taste), or you need to self-isolate because a family member is unwell, please contact CT Scanning Department at 01793 605051. **Do not go to the hospital or to your appointment without speaking to them first.**

### Contacting SOC Pathway Team

- If you have any questions, queries or concerns of the investigation or the referral and you would like to discuss further please contact the Clinical Navigator on 01793 607791 or email: [gwh.symptomsofconcern@nhs.net](mailto:gwh.symptomsofconcern@nhs.net). Currently, this will be attended within hours of Mondays 8 am – 12 pm and Thursdays 1-5 pm; please leave messages if outside these times. Please also use these contacts if you need to cancel or rearrange your appointments within good times.
- If you need to cancel or rearrange your CT scan appointment more urgently then please contact CT Scanning Department on 01793 605051.
- Information on CT scan : [www.nhs.uk/conditions/ct-scan/pages/introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ct-scan/pages/introduction.aspx)

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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