



# BEING REFERRED FOR A CT SCAN

## ● WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

You have been referred for a chest CT scan. The hospital will contact you in the next few days to offer you an appointment. If you do not hear from the hospital in the next week, or if you have any questions, please contact the lung health nurses.

## ● WHAT IS A CT SCAN ?

A CT scan is a type of x-ray and is regularly used to detect many illnesses, including those in the chest. A chest CT scan shows more detailed pictures of the lungs than a standard chest x-ray and involves more radiation. However, you have been referred for a 'low dose' CT scan, which is recommended for lung screening and which gives off less radiation than a standard CT scan. The radiation dose is about equal to background radiation over 6 months in the UK.

Your doctor is aware of this and is always cautious about recommending a CT scan. A CT scan takes about 5-10 minutes. It is done by a Radiographer, and a Consultant Radiologist interprets that scan and prepares a report for your Doctor.

## ● HOW LONG DOES A CT SCAN TAKE?

The CT scan will take only a few minutes. There is no need to prepare for the CT scan.

The radiographer will ask you to lie on a special bed, which will move slowly through the scanning machine. Unlike some machines, the CT scanner is not enclosed. It is like a big doughnut.

You will need to lie very still while each picture is taken. You may also be asked to hold your breath for a moment. You will not feel any pain during the scan.

- **WHEN WILL I GET MY RESULTS AND WHO WILL GIVE THEM TO ME?**

You should get your results within 5 working days. If your scan has no major findings you will get a letter. If there is anything of concern on your scan the lung health check project team or your GP will contact you directly.

If you have not had your results in 2 weeks please contact the lung health nurses.

Whatever the result is we hope that your discussion with the lung nurse will help you to improve your lung health in the future.

- **BENEFITS OF HAVING A CT SCAN**

The benefit of having a chest CT scan is that we can detect any problems early or reassure you that all is well. The three main results of having the scan are:

1. **CT scan may show possible lung cancer**

If you have no symptoms now this is likely to be at an early stage. This means that modern, effective treatment can be offered with a much better outlook.

2. **CT scan is normal:**

You can be reassured that lung cancer is very unlikely. But it is important to look after your lung health. If you have symptoms which might be to do with your lungs, please go back to see your GP.

3. **CT scan shows a 'nodule':**

This is a small shadow on the CT scan, maybe just a few millimetres (less than an inch) in size. Up to 1 in 4 older people, especially smokers may have a lung nodule. Most of these are not cancerous and will not grow larger. They will be monitored by the hospital. If one does grow you may need a further CT scan or further tests.

- WHAT ELSE CAN BE FOUND ON A CT SCAN?

Sometimes the scan can find things like a chest infection. In this case your GP would contact you and offer treatment.

There is a small risk that we may find other problems in your lungs, and have to do a repeat CT scan or further tests, while if left untreated this would have caused you problems. Our current evidence is that this is unlikely to happen.

- ARE THERE ANY OTHER RISKS OF HAVING A CT SCAN?

Although unlikely, complications can occur during further tests, surgery and other treatment. Finding something wrong can cause stress and anxiety for you and your family. There is support available from your healthcare teams for you and your family at all stages of tests and treatment.

- HOW RELIABLE IS A CT SCAN AT DIAGNOSING LUNG CANCER?

In a very small number of cases a lung cancer may be present but not found on a CT scan, even by the most skilled radiologists. So it is important, in future, even if your CT is normal, to see your GP if you have any worrying chest symptoms.

If you have any questions, please contact the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation's Ask the Nurse service:

**0800 358 7200**

(9am – 5pm Mon – Thurs

9am – 4pm Fri)

