CT Scanner
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What is a CT scanner?
A CT (Computed Tomography) scanner is a highly sophisticated computer and X-ray machine that work together to make a series of images. The test is relatively simple, safe, and painless. The scan can find many conditions that do not show up on regular X-rays.

Why is a CT scan done?
A CT scan gives much better images of bone and soft tissue organs than ordinary X-rays. An ordinary X-ray image will only show the differences in thickness between air, bone, and soft tissue. The CT scanner will show very fine density differences in the same tissue. The results of the test will help your doctor recommend the best treatment for you.
Where is a CT scan done?
The scan is done in the Diagnostic Imaging (X-ray) Department at the Victoria General site, Halifax Infirmary site, Dartmouth General Hospital, or Cobequid Community Health Centre.

Who will do the CT scan?
The scan will be done by a highly-trained team of technologists and a radiologist (a specially-trained doctor). Interpreting the images helps the radiologist to make a medical diagnosis.

How long will the scan take?
• The time needed for the scan depends on the type of study.
  › The average time for a scan is 15-20 minutes.
  › A scan of the head or spine takes 10-15 minutes.
  › A body scan, such as the abdomen (tummy) and pelvis (hips) or chest, takes 15-20 minutes.
How do I get ready?

• If you wear loose clothing without any metal (buttons, zippers, etc.), you may not have to change your clothes.

• You may be asked not to eat or drink for 4 hours before your scan. Please follow any instructions you received with your appointment notification.

• For some examinations of the abdomen, you will be asked to drink Gastrografin®.
  › Gastrografin® is available at no cost from the Diagnostic Imaging Department. Please pick up the Gastrografin® at least one day before your appointment.

What happens during the scan?

• You will be positioned on a comfortable table. The table will move in and out of a doughnut-like hole in the machine during the scan.

• You will be asked to stay very still as the machine does all the work.

• You may be asked to hold your breath.

• You will be alone in the room. The technologist will be able to see and talk to you during the test.
When is a contrast agent (X-ray dye) used?

• A contrast agent is used for most patients. It is used to outline blood vessels or organs such as the liver or kidneys so they can be seen more easily.

• Before giving you the contrast agent, we will ask you some questions. It is very important for our staff members to know if you are pregnant, or have diabetes or any food or drug allergies. Answer all the questions you are asked about your general health very carefully.

• We must know if you have had a reaction to a contrast agent in the past.

• Reactions rarely happen today because the newer products are safer. Tell the technologist right away if you get itchy, short of breath, or have any discomfort.

How is the contrast agent given?

The technologist will inject the contrast agent into a vein, usually in the arm. An automatic syringe pump is usually used to give the injection.
After the scan
The radiologist will review all the images and prepare a report for your doctor.

What are your questions?
Please ask. We are here to help you.

Notes:
If you can’t keep your appointment, please call the booking office right away so another patient can be booked in your time slot:
Cobequid Community Health Centre: 902-869-6102
Dartmouth General Hospital: 902-465-8598
QEII (VG or Halifax Infirmary): 902-473-2162