

## COMPUTERIZED TOMOGRAPHY (CT) CERVICAL SPINE

**OVERVIEW:** Computed tomography, also called a CT scan, is a sophisticated diagnostic imaging procedure capable of depicting anatomy at different levels within the body. This ability, known as cross-sectional imaging, is possible because the x-ray source rotates around the patient during a CT scan, encircling the patient's body and capturing anatomical detail from many angles. Each rotation of the x-ray beam produces a single cross-sectional "slice" of anatomy, like the slices of a loaf of bread. Computed tomography allows physicians to see a single slice of the body, just as if you were taking a slice of bread out of a loaf.

You may be given a contrast agent to drink before the examination begins. You may also have contrast administered to you through an IV injection in a vein. You may feel nauseous, flushed or headachy after the contrast is administered; these are normal reactions. However, if you feel itchy or short of breath, you may be having an allergic reaction to the contrast and you should tell the technologist immediately.

The CT technologist will position you on the scanning table and guide the table into the CT unit. The technologist will not be in the room during the scan, but will be able to observe you through a window from an adjacent room and will be able to hear you and talk to you through a two-way microphone system.

The technologist will tell you when each scan sequence is beginning and how long it will last. For certain scans, you may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds. Even the slightest movement can blur the image so it is important to hold still during the exam.

**PREP:** None.

**PROCEDURE:** The patient will lie on a table on their back. Your head will be placed in a special holder. You will be asked to hold very still throughout the exam. The exam will take approximately 15 minutes.

**RESULTS:** When your exam is complete a radiologist will read your CT scans. Your ordering physician will contact you with the results in approximately 3 days. Your physician will then advise you of the results and discuss what further procedures, if any, are needed.