



CT of the Head (with IV contrast)

Exam scheduling (218)249-5593
St. Luke's (218)249-5555
Diagnostic Imaging
(218)249-5222
[www.slhduluth.com/hospital/ima-
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Exam Information

Diagnostic Imaging

What is a CT head exam?

CT scans (sometimes called CAT scans) are specialized xray exams that produce detailed pictures of the bones, soft tissues and blood vessels of your head. These scans are done using sophisticated computers to create cross-sectional images of your body.

How is the exam performed?

You will be lying on your back on a padded table with your head in a special cradle. The technologist will position you using pillows if necessary to make you comfortable. If you are having intravenous (IV) contrast media, the technologist will place an IV needle in your arm.

During the scan the table will move into the "donut" shaped scanner. The first scan is done quickly to help determine the exam's starting point.

The second phase of the scan has slower movement through the scanner. This is also when the contrast media would be automatically injected into the IV.

How should I prepare for the exam?

Bring a copy of the order written by your doctor. If you are allergic to x-ray contrast tell your doctor or the technologist before the scan. Bring a list of your current medications.

- Do not eat any solid foods for 4 hours prior to your exam time. You may take your daily medications.
- You can have clear liquids until 2 hours prior to your exam time.
- Dress in comfortable clothes. Try to wear clothing without metal (such as belt buckles, underwire bras etc.) If this is not possible, a gown will be provided for your exam.

What will I feel during the exam?

You will have some discomfort when the IV is inserted into the vein in your arm. IV contrast media, upon injection, sometimes gives patients a warm feeling all over and you may notice a metallic taste or smell. These sensations last only a minute or two.

Some patients may find it difficult to lie still for the duration of the exam due to chronic pain. Speak to your physician or to the technologist before the scan if you have concerns of this nature.

Who interprets the exam and when will I get my results?

After the exam, a radiologist who is specially trained to interpret CT exams will review your x-rays and send a written report to the physician that ordered the exam for you. That physician will then contact you with your results.