

Having a radiotherapy planning CT scan with contrast

The aim of this leaflet is to help answer some of the questions you may have about having a radiotherapy planning CT (computerised tomography) scan with contrast. It explains the benefits and risks of the procedure, as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the doctor or radiographer caring for you.

What is a CT scan?

To plan your radiotherapy treatment, you will need to have a CT (computerised tomography) scan. A CT scanner uses x-rays to give us detailed images of the inside of your body.

For the scan, we will ask you to lie on the couch and the radiographers will move you to the position that you will be in for your radiotherapy treatment. It is important that you are comfortable and are able to lie still in this position. Please tell the radiographers if you do not think this will be possible.

The couch will move slowly through the open scanner – you will not feel anything and nothing will touch you. You will be asked to breathe normally and keep as still as possible.

What is the contrast injection?

A contrast liquid called Omnipaque® will be injected into a vein in your arm. This will allow us to see your blood vessels during the scan and will provide clearer pictures for your doctor to plan your radiotherapy treatment. Your doctor will discuss this with you and may send you to have a blood test before your planning appointment.

Using contrast does not usually cause any problems for patients. However, some people can experience side effects. The most common side effects are a general sensation of warmth in your body and/or a metallic taste in your mouth during the contrast injection. Examples of other possible side effects include nausea, vomiting, headache, high or low blood pressure or diarrhoea. If you have any questions or would like further information on the side effects of the contrast, please ask us before your scan. It is very important that you complete the questionnaire that will be provided at the CT scan and detail any allergies you have.

Please tell the radiographer immediately if you experience any other symptoms following the injection, in particular breathing difficulty and/or a rash. Allergic reactions have been reported in association with contrast dye but occur rarely.

If you have diabetes and currently take metformin, please let the radiographers know and follow the advice given by your doctor and radiographers.

What are the alternatives?

It is sometimes not possible to use the contrast injection for medical reasons, or if access to your veins is not successful. In this situation, the CT scan will be performed without contrast.

How long will I be in hospital?

We would advise you to allow a total of two hours for this appointment. You may wish to bring something to eat and drink with you, particularly if you have diabetes.

Chat 30 mins	→	Preparation for scan/injection 15 mins-45 mins	→	Scan 30 mins	→	Wait 15 mins	1 hour 30 mins- 2 hours in total
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When the scan and injection are complete, you will need to remain in the hospital for a further 15 minutes. If you feel unwell or develop any symptoms, you must report to a member of staff and inform them that you have had a contrast injection.

What if I have any problems after I have gone home?

If you feel unwell or develop any symptoms once you have left the hospital, including signs of an allergic reaction (for example wheeziness, difficulty in breathing or tightness in your chest, skin rash, lumps, itchy spots, swelling of your face, dizziness or feeling faint), you must contact your GP or local emergency (A&E) department.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about CT scans with contrast, please contact the radiotherapy pre-treatment area on **020 7188 3160** between 9am and 5pm.

Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals offer a range of cancer-related information leaflets for patients and carers, available at www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/cancer-leaflets. For information leaflets on other conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets



Dimbleby Cancer Care provides cancer support services for Guy's and St Thomas'. We have a drop-in information area staffed by specialist nurses and offer complementary therapies, psychological support and benefits advice for patients and carers.

Dimbleby Cancer Care is located in the Welcome Village of the Cancer Centre at Guy's. **t:** 020 7188 5918 **e:** DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the clinical nurse specialist or other member of staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Leaflet number: 2693/VER4

Date published: November 2016

Review date: January 2019

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