

## CT Scan of the Spine or Extremity

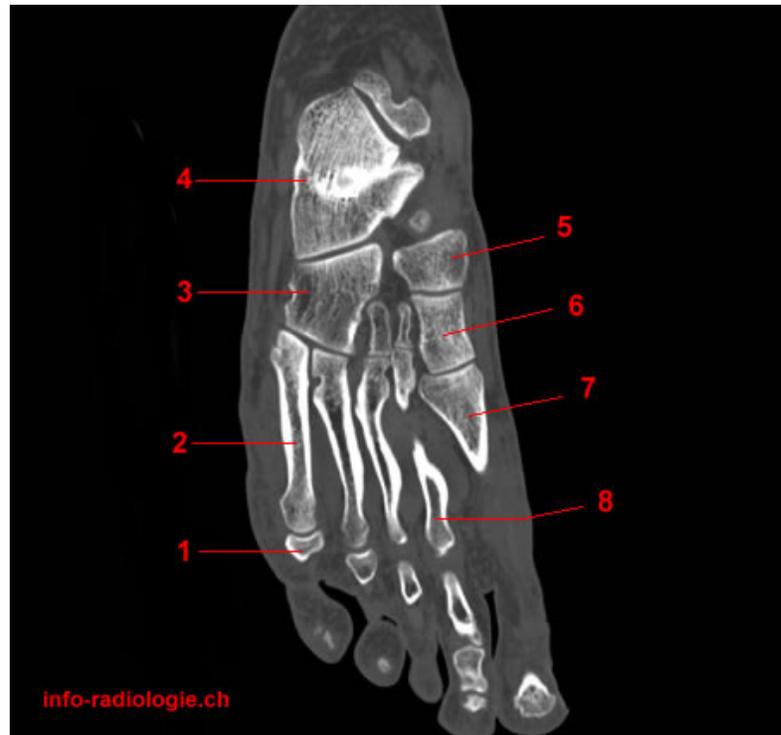
(Abdominal CT)

### Definition

A CT scan is a type of x-ray. It uses a computer to make pictures of the inside of the body.



Spine



Foot

### Reasons for Test

A CT scan is done to study the bone structure, inter-vertebral disc spaces and soft tissue. Your doctor will look for signs of:

- Injury
- Tumors
- Infections
- Other diseases

Your doctor may recommend a spine or extremity CT scan if you have the following symptoms:

- Numbness or tingling in an extremity
- Cancer

- Pain
- Fractures
- Spondylolisthesis
- Fixation devices
- Trauma
- Scoliosis
- Herniated discs
- Vertebral plasty
- Osteoporosis
- Cellulitis
- Swelling
- Loose bodies or bone fragments
- Meriscus tear
- Rotator cuff tear

## Possible Complications

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Sometimes a medication called "contrast" is used to help improve the pictures. Complications with contrast are rare. Possible complications with contrast include:

- Allergic reaction
- Kidney failure

Be sure to discuss these risks with your doctor before the test.

A CT scan may not be advised if you are pregnant. Talk to your doctor.

## What to Expect

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### Prior to Test

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Your doctor may tell you to:

- Avoid eating or drinking anything for two hours before the test if contrast will be used.
- Remove any metal objects (for example, jewelry, hearing aids, or dentures).

### Description of the Test

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Sometimes contrast is necessary. It helps make certain organs and tissue easier to see in pictures. It is often given by mouth in a drink. Other times, it will be injected into a vein.

You will be positioned on a special moving table. The table will move slowly through the CT scanner. You will need to stay still during the entire test. As the scanner takes pictures, you will hear humming and clicking. The technologist will ask you to hold your breath at certain points. This will help get a clear picture. You will be able to talk to the technician with an intercom.

### After Test

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If you had contrast, you may be told to drink extra fluid. This will flush the contrast from your body.

## **How Long Will It Take?**

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About 10-15 minutes

## **Will It Hurt?**

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CT scans are painless. If you receive contrast, you may feel some discomfort when the IV is placed and/or removed. You may feel warm and flushed when contrast is injected into your vein or you may have a metallic taste in your mouth.

## **Results**

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The CT images will be sent to a radiologist who will analyze them. Your doctor will receive the results and discuss them with you.

## **Call Your Doctor**

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If you are given contrast, call your doctor if any of the following occurs after the test:

- Hives
- Itching
- Nausea
- Swollen, itchy eyes
- Tightness of throat
- Difficulty breathing

In case of an emergency, call for medical help right away.

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