

Patient Information

CT Contrast Enema (Rectal Contrast)

What is a CT scan?

Computed Tomography (CT) is a fast, effective and accurate way of using x-rays to take pictures in very fine slices through the part of the body that the doctor has asked to be investigated.

What preparation is required?

A CT rectal contrast examination may also require intravenous contrast. Therefore, patients are required to fast for two hours prior to the examination. Please continue to drink water and take medications with water during this period as necessary. Patients who have poor kidney function (renal impairment) or are taking Metformin for diabetes recent blood test, the results of which will help the radiologist to determine if x-ray contrast can be given.

What oral preparation do I need?

A CT rectal contrast examination is often used to enhance images of the large intestines, but if indicated by the reporting radiologist we may also scan the entire abdomen and pelvis. Common pathologies requiring rectal contrast include fistulas between the rectum and bladder or vagina, rectal or perirectal abscesses, diverticulosis/diverticulitis and rectal or sigmoid carcinoma. CT scans of the abdomen and pelvis require 1-1.5 litre of water to be gradually consumed over the 90 minutes before the scan appointment time. By drinking the water, the reporting radiologist can see your bowel more clearly. Sometimes a positive oral contrast solution may be needed to be given in preference over water. This can only be consumed in the CT department. The required oral preparation will be indicated to you at the time of making your appointment. You are allowed to go to the toilet at any time once beginning the oral preparation.

What is involved?

The radiographer will position you on the CT table and the table will move in and out of the CT scanner and a series of pictures will be performed. Pre-contrast images may be first obtained of the rectum if deemed necessary by the reporting radiologist. A dilute contrast solution will be introduced into the rectum via a catheter with a syringe, known as an enema. An enema is where a soft flexible catheter is inserted into the rectum while a patient lies on their side and is held in place by a small inflatable balloon. You may feel mild discomfort and generalised fullness during this process. A volume between 100ml - 300ml is commonly given under radiologist instruction.

Patients may be asked to try and clench their pelvic muscles in order to hold onto the catheter and contrast solution. In doing so, the best quality imaging can be obtained.

Rectal contrast helps to greatly increase the sensitivity of the CT exam. It is important to relax as much as possible until the CT scan is complete. Once the desired amount of contrast has been delivered into the rectum intravenous contrast will then be given at this point if it is also required. It is very important that you lie still for this test and hold your breath when requested. After the exam is complete, the rectal contrast will be drained and the patient may go to the bathroom.

What is an iodinated contrast injection?

Sometimes an Intravenous (IV) contrast agent may be required to help the radiologist provide a more comprehensive diagnosis. If IV contrast is required for your test you will be asked to complete a questionnaire to assess your suitability. The contrast will only be given once your consent has been obtained and information will be provided detailing the benefits and risks. The contrast is injected through a small cannula (plastic tube) inserted into a vein in your arm.

Are there any side effects?

If you have an injection of iodinated contrast, you may experience a sensation of warmth and a strange taste. These usually go away within a few minutes. In rare cases, some people may be allergic to the iodinated contrast. If you have any concerns, please contact the department and speak with one of our staff.

How long will my scan take?

Depending on the scans required it will approximately take 25 - 45 minutes.

Questions

For more information or to make an appointment, please contact North Shore Radiology and Nuclear Medicine
Phone: 02 9170 4500 Email: contact@nsrnm.com.au