

WHAT IS A CT SCAN OF THE SPINE?

A CT scan of the spine may be performed to assess the spine for a herniated disk, tumors and other lesions, the extent of injuries, structural anomalies such as spina bifida (a type of congenital defect of the spine), blood vessel malformations, or other conditions, particularly when another type of examination, such as X-rays or physical examination, is not conclusive. CT of the spine may also be used to evaluate the effects of treatment of the spine, such as surgery or other therapy. Your physician may order a CT of the cervical, thoracic, or lumbar spine.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The test may require you to lay flat, lay on your stomach, or on your side. Multiple images of your anatomy will be taken. You must be still during the exam, because movement causes blurred images. Your technician may ask you to hold your breath sometimes and keep still to get a more accurate picture. Please inform the technologist if you are pregnant. Many imaging tests are not preformed during pregnancy.

Most CT scans take about 30 minutes. The technologist will give you discharge instructions after the completion of the test.

RESULTS

A radiologist will review your images and send a report to your doctor who ordered the test in 48 hours. You'll get a call from your doctor's office to discuss the results and next steps. To check your results in our secure, online patient portal, My UNC Chart, visit www.myuncchart.org.