Computed Axial Tomography (CT Scan)

Directions to Diagnostic Imaging Center at North Decatur:
Enter the main hospital entrance off of North Decatur Road. Make a left turn into the first parking lot you come to. This is the parking lot for the Diagnostic Imaging Center. Enter into the front door of the Diagnostic Imaging Center. You will be greeted by a registrar, who will assist you in your registration process and escort you to your appropriate exam area.

Directions to Radiology at Hillandale:
Enter the hospital through the main entrance in front of the water fountain. Once you walk through the front door, Registration will be on your right. After registering, you’ll walk just a few steps down the hall to Imaging, which is located across from the ATM machine. Mammography and Dexa patients should report to the 5900 building, which is on the opposite side of the hospital from the main entrance and ER entrance. Registration is immediately on the left as you walk through the front door of the 5900 building.
What is a CT Scan?
A CT scan is an exam that involves the use of X-rays and a computer to produce multiple images of the inside of your body. Both the computer and the X-rays join together to produce cross-sectional views of the area being studied. CT scans have greater clarity than conventional X-ray. The scanner itself is donut shaped and will rotate around your body as it takes images. Bone, soft tissue, internal organs and blood vessels are some of the areas that can be studied using this method of imaging. This exam is essentially painless. You may wear your normal clothing. This exam should only take about 20 minutes.

Before Your Test
The prep you are required to do will vary depending on the type of exam. Some CT scans require the use of a special dye or contrast material. Some exams require both, but some may require only one. The contrast material is used to highlight certain parts of the body and create a clearer image. The contrast also helps give the radiologist additional information when reading your exam.

If you are having an abdominal or pelvic CT, you will need to pick up barium sulfate from either your physician or the Diagnostic Imaging Center. If you are having either barium sulfate or the IV dye (contrast), please do not eat or drink anything 4-6 hours prior to your procedure.

Oral Contrast
If you are having an abdominal or pelvic CT scan, you may be given either barium sulfate or Gastro View to drink prior to your procedure. The barium helps to coat the stomach, small bowel and colon.
Do not eat or drink anything for at least 2 hours prior to starting the barium sulfate. You should be finished drinking the barium 2 hours prior to your appointment time. There are few, if any, side effects to the oral contrast. You may notice white bowel movements for a couple of days after your exam. If you have any allergies to barium products and/or difficulty swallowing, talk with your physician before your CT scan.

Intravenous Contrast
Depending on the area being scanned or the symptoms you are experiencing, some of your organs or vessels may need to be better viewed. If this is the case, you will be required to sign a consent form giving us permission to give you IV contrast. A small needle will then be inserted into your hand or arm to allow the contrast to be injected into your body. This is similar to what you may feel when getting your blood drawn. If you are over the age of 70 or have a history of kidney problems, the technologist will draw blood to check your kidney function prior to giving you the contrast. This is done in the CT department and only takes 5 minutes. The contrast can cause some patients to become nauseous. Please avoid eating for 4-6 hours prior to receiving IV contrast.

Be sure to let your doctor know if you have any of the following medical conditions because it can increase your chance of having a contrast reaction:

- Any recent illnesses
- A history of heart or lung disease
- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Multiple Myeloma
- Sickle Cell Anemia
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Kidney disease or problems with your kidneys
- If you are taking any medications containing Metformin

During Your Test
You will be asked to lie on a narrow table that slides into the center of the CT scanner. Once you are inside the scanner, the machine’s X-ray beam will rotate around you and take images. Depending on your test, you will be asked to lie on your back or your stomach. A safety strap will be used to secure you to the table. You will be asked to lie very still, and you may be asked to hold your breath for different time intervals.

After Your Test
Unless otherwise instructed, please drink plenty of fluids following your exam to flush the contrast from your body. Your kidneys will remove the contrast from your body through your urine. Please do not take any medications containing Metformin for 48 hours after your exam.