

In 1972, the medical field was forever changed when Godfrey Hounsfield invented the CAT scanner. The CT (Computed Tomography) or CAT scanner allows doctors to look into the human body without ever having to pick up a scalpel. From head to toe, a CT scanner can look at it all.

Today, CT Scanners are a valuable diagnostic tool that a physician can use to help diagnose many different diseases, injuries and conditions. Do a Google search on what a CT scan can or can't show and you will get a return of thousands of pages. Of course, there are many health conditions that a CT scan is helpful in diagnosing so talk with your doctor to find out if a CT is right for you. Some of the most common reasons a healthcare provider will order a CT scan include:

- 1) Headaches
- 2) Broken bones
- 3) Kidney stones
- 4) Appendicitis
- 5) Cancer

A CT scan produces images in a “cross section” of the body. To better understand this, think of the body as if it were a loaf of bread. Each slice of bread represents a CT picture of the body. Since CT scanners use such powerful computers, the technologists that use them are able to create 3D images of the body, add color to those images and, depending on the type of scan, add animation to those images! In this way, CT technologists can give a doctor a comprehensive idea of what is going on in the body.

Unlike an MRI, a CT scan only lasts a few short minutes. It is also much more open and is much shorter than an MRI scanner. A CT scan does use radiation where an MRI does not. Since a CT scan uses much more radiation than a regular X-ray exam, the technologists at Lower Umpqua Hospital utilize the lowest possible x-ray dose to obtain the images while at the same time producing the high quality images that the doctors expect.

For all CT scans, the patient has to lie still on the CT table. Some CT scans require the patient to drink a special liquid that enables the doctors to clearly see the inside of the stomach and other hollow organs. Other times a special contrast agent or “dye” will be injected into a vein and is used to evaluate the arteries, veins and solid organs of the body. The CT scanner also has a pre-recorded voice that will tell you when to breathe and when to hold your breath. After the CT scan, patients are encouraged to stay well hydrated as this helps the body to get rid of the contrast, or dye that was put into the body.

At Lower Umpqua Hospital, our technologists are on call at night, on weekends and holidays which allows us to happily provide coverage for CT exams every day of the week at any hour. Just let your healthcare provider know that you want your CT scan done at Lower Umpqua Hospital, and we will happily take your appointment and get you scanned.

If you have any questions about CT exams or any radiology exams, please call the Lower Umpqua Hospital Radiology Department at 541.271.6326