

Preparing for your CT Coronary Angiogram



What is a CT Coronary Angiogram?

A CTCA is a quick, non-invasive test that uses a specialized computed tomography (CT) scanner to obtain a 3-dimensional image of the heart using low dose X-rays. This includes the blood vessels that supply the heart muscle, the coronary arteries. This test can show narrowed or blocked areas of a blood vessel. It can also show whether there is a bulge (aneurysm) or a buildup of cholesterol plaque in a blood vessel. CTCA also allows for accurate visualization of the 3-dimensional heart structure.

What happens during the test?

During a CTCA, you will first be given a medication called a beta-blocker to slow your heart rate to get a more accurate image. This is a short-acting medication and should be taken 30-60 minutes before your appointment time. At your appointment, you will lie on a table that passes through a doughnut-shaped opening in the CT scanner. A special dye is put into a vein through an IV in your arm or hand to make the blood vessels easier to see on the scan. Some patients may feel a warm sensation when the dye is injected. You may receive a dose of a nitroglycerin spray during the test, this opens the vessels further to obtain the most accurate picture. Most tests take 20-30 minutes.

How to prepare for the test

- Drink plenty of water before and after your test.
- Do NOT eat for 4-6 hours prior to your test.
- Do NOT consume any caffeinated products (e.g. coffee, tea, sodas, energy drinks, chocolate) for 12 hours before your test (this could raise your heart rate and make the test less accurate)
- Do NOT take erectile dysfunction medications (e.g. Viagra, Cialis) for 48 hours before your test (can have a significant interaction with nitro spray)
- Take your beta blocker (you will have received a prescription for Metoprolol from Dr. Fraser) 30-60 minutes before your test.
- Inform your doctor and the CT technologist if you have any allergies or prior reactions to contrast dye.
- For women, inform your doctor and the CT technologist if there is any possibility that you are pregnant.
- If you are taking METFORMIN, please hold it for 24 hours AFTER your test.