

# LUNG HEALTH CLINIC

## Frequently Asked Questions

Benefits and risks of  
having a CT scan



## What is a CT scan?

A CT scan is a type of X-ray and is regularly used to detect many illnesses, including those in the chest. A chest CT scan shows more detailed pictures of the lungs than a standard chest X-Ray and involves more radiation. The radiation dose is about equal to background radiation over 6 months in the UK. Your doctor is aware of this and is always cautious about recommending a CT scan.

A CT scan takes about 5-10 minutes. It is done by a Radiographer, and a Consultant Radiologist interprets that scan and prepares a report for your Doctor.

## Benefits of having a CT scan

The benefit of having a chest CT scan is that we can detect any problems early or reassure you that all is well. The three main results of having the scan are:

### 1. CT scan may show possible lung cancer

If you have no symptoms now this is likely to be at an early stage. This means that modern effective treatment can be offered with a much better outlook.

### 2. CT scan is normal

You can be reassured that lung cancer is very unlikely. But it is important to look after your lung health. If you have any symptoms which might be to do with your lungs, please come back to see your GP.

### 3. CT shows a 'nodule'

This is a small shadow on the CT scan, maybe just a few millimetres (less than an inch) in size. Up to 1 in 4 older people, especially smokers may have a lung nodule. Most of these are not cancerous and will not grow larger. They will be monitored by the hospital. If one does grow you may need a further CT scan or further tests.

## What else can be found on a CT scan?

Sometimes the scan can find things like a chest infection. In this case your GP would contact you and offer treatment.

There is a small risk that we may find other problems in your lungs, and have to do a repeat CT or further tests, while if left untreated this would never have caused you problems. Our current evidence is that this is unlikely to happen.

## Are there any other risks of having a CT scan?

Although unlikely, complications can occur during further tests, surgery and other treatment. Finding something wrong can cause stress and anxiety for you and your family. There is support available from your healthcare teams for you and your family at all stages of tests and treatment.

## How reliable is a CT scan at diagnosing lung cancer?

In a very small number of cases a lung cancer may be present but not found on a CT scan, even by the most skilled radiologists. So it is important, in future, even if your CT is normal, to see your GP if you have any worrying chest symptoms.

If you have any further questions please contact the Lung Nurse Service: **0151 254 3032** (9am - 5pm, Monday - Friday)

