

Whole-Body CT Screening

CT S C R E E N I N G

What Is CT Screening? What Is It Used For?

CT screening (or scanning) is a way of using x-rays to get images of the inside of the body. A CT scan shows “slices” or cross-sections of the body. It is a tool used to help doctors learn what is wrong and how to treat the problem. CT can be helpful when a person has signs of a disease or a condition. It can help to confirm or rule out the disease or condition.

CT stands for Computed Tomography. It can also be called CAT for Computerized Axial Tomography. CT scans are often called “whole-body CT scanning” or “whole-body CT screening.”

What Are the Risks and Benefits of Whole-Body CT Screening?

Possible Harm

- CT scans expose you to radiation. There is a small risk of getting cancer from radiation.
- The pictures might show something that is not really there. This may alarm you for no reason.
- The pictures might show something unusual that turns out not to be a problem. This can also worry you for no reason.

Possible Benefit

A CT scan can benefit you if it shows something that is truly a problem or abnormal. If it finds a hidden, serious disease it can be helpful, but only if:

- There is a treatment that works.
- The disease is found early enough for you to benefit from the treatment.

Should I Have a Whole-Body CT Screening? **NO**

You may be thinking about having a whole-body scan even if you have no symptoms. You might be thinking, “For my peace of mind, I just want to know that I don’t have any diseases now.”

OR

“If I have a disease, I want to know about it now so I can do something about it.”

You may have heard that a whole-body CT scan or screen is a good idea for healthy people who have no symptoms. But the FDA does not agree.

The FDA knows of no data stating that whole-body screening is effective in detecting any particular disease early enough for the disease to be managed, treated, or cured; or spare a person from the problems associated with serious illness or premature death.

Whole-Body CT Screening (cont.)

The FDA Has Not Approved CT Screening for Healthy People

The FDA has never approved CT for any body part for any specific disease. The FDA have never approved CT scans for the whole body when there are no signs of disease.

Statements that say, or imply, that FDA has approved whole-body screening are wrong. There is no proof that whole-body CT scans can find any disease early enough for it to be treated or cured. And there is no proof that a CT scan can prevent problems linked to serious illness or early death.

To Learn More...

Article from the FDA Consumer magazine (Nov.-Dec. 2001) describing whole-body CT scanning. http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2001/601_ct.html