



**nurse
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Going for a scan

Whilst you were in hospital, you would have had many scans in order for the doctors and nurses to understand what was going on inside your head.

A scan is like having a very clever photograph taken of inside the brain. There are a few different scans you can have, but will talk about the two main types here – CT and MRI.

This section will tell you more about scans. It will tell you:

- **What does 'having a scan' mean?**
- **Why do I need to have a scan and does it hurt?**
- **Do scans hurt?**
- **Is having a scan like having an operation?**
- **What does a radiographer do?**
- **What are the different types of scan?**
- **All about CT Scans**
- **All about MRI scans**
- **What happens next?**
- **Having scans after you have gone home from hospital.**

What does having a scan mean and does it hurt?

Having a scan means that you will have some very clever photographs or images taken of what is going on inside your body!

Having a scan does not hurt at all. Sometimes people can feel frightened or worried but if it is a very big problem they can have some medication to make them feel chilled out and relaxed before having the scan.

Why do I need to have a scan?

Scans are very important because they tell the doctors what the brain looks like. More specifically it tells the doctors what the 'structures' of the brain look like. This means they can see if there is any physical damage or if there is a problem developing.

Different scans show different things but scans can be used to detect brain damage, tumours, lumps, cysts and blood clots (haematomas), or see if the ventricles in the brain are swollen.





Scans are used to see how your head injury has affected the brain. They can also be used after surgery to see how the brain is doing after the operation.

Is having a scan like having an operation?

Having a scan is completely different! A scan is not the same as having an operation at all. Operations are performed by surgeons, scans are performed by radiographers. Scans do not involve you having to be cut open or anything like that!

What does a Radiographer do?

The scan equipment is complicated, expensive and hard to operate! The pictures that the scans produce can be very complicated to read and understand too.

A radiographer is someone who has trained for a long time and knows all about taking pictures inside the body.

Radiographers are all trained to use scan equipment and can help the doctors to decide what the pictures mean.

What are the different types of scan?

There are two main types of scan:

- **MRI Scan** - MRI stands for Magnetic Resonance Imaging
- **CT Scan** (used to be called a CAT scan) - CT stands for Computer Tomography.

All about CT scans

The CT scanner looks like a giant Polo mint! A special bed moves you into the scan but it doesn't take very long to take the pictures.

CT scans do not hurt or cause any damage. CT scans look at the soft parts inside the body by taking hundreds of pictures. The pictures are then looked at by a computer and the computer gives a print out of what the body looks like inside. The pictures are printed out as if the body has been divided into slices. It is then possible to have a good look at what is going on inside.





CT scans can tell you lots of things like if there is a tumour, lump or cyst somewhere in the brain or if there is any damage to the grey matter of the brain (the neurons).

All about MRI scans

The MRI scan looks like a tube, where a special bed slides inside so that you can have pictures taken of inside of your body. An MRI scan can take a long time to do!

MRI scans are even better than CT scans but not every hospital has one. Whereas CT scans look at slices, the MRI scan can look at every cell in the body in both the bone and soft tissue!

It uses a powerful magnet and radio waves to make the tiny cells in the body sing. As the cells sing, a special computer picks up the noise and maps out where the cells are and what they are doing. It then gives a detailed printout of what the inside of the body looks like so that the doctors can decide what to do.

MRI scans can even be used during operations to help the surgeon to decide what to do next.

What happens next?

After you have had a scan the pictures will be sent for 'reporting'. This means that the doctors and radiographers look at the scans in great detail to decide what the pictures are showing and what they mean. After they have done this, they can think of a plan and the best way to treat your brain problem. When you were in hospital, scans were really important in getting you better!

Having scans after you've gone home from hospital

Now that you have been discharged from hospital, it is still likely that you will have to go to hospital every so often to have a scan. This is so the doctors can see how your brain is getting on now. When you first hurt your brain, your brain would have been very 'tight', meaning that the brain was quite squashed in the skull. By now, the swelling will have gone down, but the doctors still need to see if the structures in your brain are okay.

