

Whole-Body (CT) Screening

What is CT imaging? What is it used for?

CT stands for Computed Tomography. It can also be called CAT for Computerized Axial Tomography. CT imaging is a way of using X-rays to get “pictures” of the inside of the body. It may help to find disease or health problems.

What is whole-body CT screening?

Some clinics offer a new use of CT called whole-body CT screening. It claims to find disease when people have no symptoms.

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 scare 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 help you if it shows something that is really a problem. 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 use the treatment.

Should I have 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.”

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

The FDA has not approved CT screening for healthy people

- The FDA has never approved CT scans for screening the whole body when there are no symptoms of health problems.
- Claims that FDA has approved whole-body screening are wrong.
- There is no proof that whole-body CT scans can find any health problems early enough for it to be treated or cured.
- There is no proof that a CT scan can stop serious illness or early death.



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FDA Office of Women's Health <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

To Learn More:

FDA Center for Devices and Radiological Health
<http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/ct/index.html>

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