

CT SCAN OF THE SINUSES AND NOSE

The introduction of computed tomography (CT) and the wider use of it in the last 20 years have further contributed to the physician's ability to appreciate nuances of paranasal sinus anatomy and accurate disease correlation.

 

 Sinus CT

A computed tomography (CT) scan of the sinus is an imaging test that uses x-rays to create detailed pictures of the air-filled spaces inside the face (sinuses).

Once you are inside the scanner, the machine's x-ray beam rotates around you. (Modern "spiral" scanners can perform the exam without stopping.)

A computer creates separate images of the body area, called slices. These images can be stored, viewed on a monitor, or printed on film. Three-dimensional models of the body area can be created by stacking the slices together.

**You must be still during the exam**, because movement causes blurred images. You may be told to hold your breath for short periods of time. Straps and pillows may be used to keep you still during the procedure.

The actual scan should take less than a minute. The entire process may take about 15 minutes.

Why the Test is Performed

CT rapidly creates detailed pictures of the sinuses. The test may diagnose or detect:

Birth defects in the sinuses

Infection in the bones of the sinuses (osteomyelitis)

Injury to the face over the sinuses

Masses and tumors, including cancer

Nasal polyps

The cause of repeated bloody noses (epistaxis)

Sinus infection or sinusitis or a sinus infection

The results from this test may also help your health care provider plan for sinus surgery

**Risks**

Risks of CT scans include:

Being exposed to radiation

CT scans do expose you to more radiation than regular x-rays. Having many x-rays or CT scans over time may increase your risk for cancer. However, the risk from any one scan is small. You and your doctor should weigh this risk against the benefits of getting a correct diagnosis for a medical problem.