CT Scans and Patient Safety:
Information for Patients

Q: I am getting a computerized tomography (CT) scan at a HealthEast facility. But I’ve recently heard in the news that there are concerns about CT scans. Is this safe?
A: Yes, it is safe for you to get a CT scan. It’s important to remember that CT scans help save lives. Your physician has ordered a CT scan so that he or she can get the clearest image possible inside your body, without having you undergo surgery. The benefits of this procedure far outweigh the risks. The CT scan allows your physician to determine if there is a medical problem, pinpoint its location and begin the most appropriate treatment for you, if needed.

Q: What are the advantages to a CT scan?
A: A CT scan offers several important advantages over other forms of equipment to help best understand your medical condition. The CT scan sends a series of X-rays through a part of your body. The series consists of slices, which create a precise, detailed look inside of you that other tests cannot provide. Once a CT scan has been completed, a specially trained physician called a radiologist will talk with your doctor about what the test showed. The CT scan gives your doctor – and doctors who specialize in treating certain conditions, if necessary – the most helpful tool to help decide how to proceed with treatment, if you need it.

Q: What about the amount of radiation that is used in a CT scan?
A: Any radiology procedure, including CT scans, involves a small amount of exposure to radiation. That is why HealthEast is committed to making sure that CT scans are ordered only when they are the most appropriate tool. When you undergo a CT scan, the computer will alter the dose of radiation on every single slice. This keeps the dose to the minimum amount possible.

Q: What other steps is HealthEast taking to help ensure safety in imaging?
A: In addition to the measures described above, HealthEast is accredited by the American College of Radiology (ACR). Accreditation means we have met the ACR’s exacting standards for patient safety and quality. In addition, we have child-specific dosing levels for pediatric patients. Our equipment is regularly monitored to ensure that it is performing correctly. Also, we do not do whole body scanning as there is no evidence to support that it is beneficial.

Q: What can I do if I have further questions?
A: The best thing is to talk with your physician. He or she will be able to discuss the benefits and risks in your treatment and how best to proceed.

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