

CT Calcium Score

A patient's guide



CT Calcium Score is a diagnostic tool used to detect coronary artery disease (CAD) at an early stage. This is a screening exam that may be recommended by a physician for patients with risk factors for CAD but have no clinical symptoms.

What is a CT Calcium Score?

CT Calcium Scoring is used to calculate the amount of calcium in the coronary arteries—the vessels that supply blood and oxygen to the heart. Over time, calcium build-up can narrow the arteries or even close off blood flow to the heart. This can result in chest pain or a heart attack.

How are the results obtained?

A cardiac computed tomography (CT) scan is a non-invasive way of obtaining information about the location and extent of calcium in the coronary arteries. The findings on cardiac CT are expressed as a Calcium Score.

Who should be screened?

The procedure is most often suggested for men aged 45 years or older and for women who are aged 55 and above or who are postmenopausal.

Besides age, other risk factors for CAD include:

- Abnormally high blood cholesterol levels
- Family history of heart disease
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Cigarette smoking
- Being overweight or obese
- Being physically inactive

If you have any of the risk factors mentioned, contact your healthcare provider to see if CT Calcium Score is appropriate for you.

What are the benefits?

- A CT Calcium Score is a convenient and non-invasive way of evaluating the coronary arteries.
- It takes little time and causes no pain.
- The exam does not require injection of contrast material and therefore avoids its possible side effects.
- The exam can suggest the presence of CAD even when the coronary arteries are less than 50 percent narrowed. Standard cardiac tests will not reliably detect this level of blockage, and more than half of all heart attacks occur with less than 50 percent narrowing.

Does insurance cover this?

At this time CT Calcium Score screenings are not routinely covered by most health insurance plans and may be available only on a self-pay basis.

If the CT scan detects an abnormality that requires further imaging tests or intervention, these additional procedures are often covered by most health insurance plans.



Image of a calcium deposit.

For more information about CT Calcium Score screening or to schedule an exam, please contact Centralized Scheduling at (520) 733-7226 or visit Radltd.com

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CT Calcium Score (cont.)

What are the risks and limitations?

With CT scanning, there is always risk associated with radiation exposure. However, the benefit of an accurate diagnosis far outweighs the risk.

CT Calcium Score Screening does have some limitations. Not all calcium deposits in the coronary arteries mean that there is a blockage, and not all blocked arteries contain calcium. Also, the earliest form of coronary artery disease, soft plaque, cannot be detected by cardiac CT.

How should I prepare?

- Continue to take your usual medications, but avoid caffeine and smoking for four hours before the exam.
- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing to your exam. You may be given a gown to wear during the procedure.
- Metal objects including jewelry (particularly necklaces) may affect the CT images and should be left at home or removed prior to your exam.
- Women should always inform their physician or technologist if there is any possibility that they are pregnant. Generally, CT scanning is not recommended for pregnant women because of potential risk to the baby.

What should I expect?

The technologist begins by positioning you on the CT examination table, lying flat on your back.

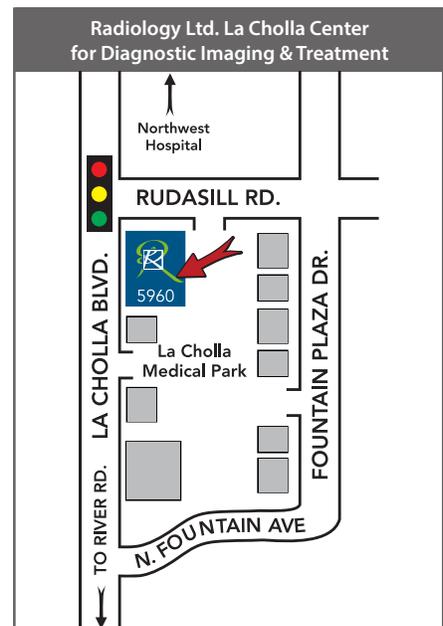
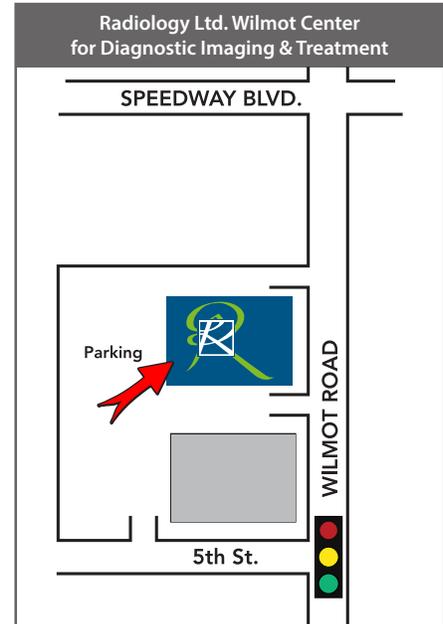
Electrodes (small metal discs) will be attached to your chest and to an electrocardiograph (ECG) machine that records the electrical activity of the heart. This makes it possible to record CT scans when the heart is not actively contracting.

Then, the table will move slowly through the machine as the CT scanning is performed. Patients are periodically asked to hold their breath for short increments of time while images are recorded.

When the examination is completed, you will be asked to wait while the technologist determines that the images are of high enough quality for the radiologist to read. The actual CT scanning is usually completed within 10 minutes.

After the exam, you can return to your normal activities.

CT Calcium Score screenings are available at two Radiology Ltd. locations



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