

CT pulmonary angiography

Information for patients during pregnancy

Description of procedure

Your doctors have ordered a test called a “CT pulmonary angiogram” or CTPA to see if you have a pulmonary embolus. A **pulmonary embolus** is a blood clot in a blood vessel in the lungs. The test includes a CT scan of your chest and the injection of x-ray dye (contrast) into your blood. You will need to hold your breath for a very short time and lie on the table while the scan is done.

The test does expose you to some radiation. At YNHH, all of our CTPA exams are designed to use the least amount of radiation possible, while still having an accurate test.

Radiation (X-rays) to the fetus during pregnancy

The effects of radiation on an unborn baby (fetus) have been associated with birth defects, growth retardation, and abnormal brain development. However, the minimal dose the fetus receives during this procedure has not been associated with fetal anomalies (birth defects) or fetal loss. Complications may occur with radiation doses much higher than those used for this test.

There is also a small risk to your baby for the development of cancer later in life related to radiation exposure. These cases are rare. The fetus may also absorb small amounts of iodine from the x-ray dye. Studies have not shown any harmful effect on a baby’s thyroid function. In the United States, all newborn babies often get their thyroid function tested after birth routinely.

Risks of not having the CTPA

This study will help your doctor find out if you have a blood clot in your lungs. This is a potentially life- threatening condition. Your doctors have asked you to have this test because they feel the benefits of diagnosing this condition are greater than the risks (explained above) to you and your baby from the radiation and x-ray dye. We feel this is a safe and effective test for this potentially condition.

Alternatives

Another possible test for this condition is a VQ scan, which involves injection of a radioactive agent and also exposes the baby to a very small amount of radiation. We can discuss the pros and cons of this test with you.

Assurances

If you decide not to have the test, your decision will not affect how you are treated by your doctors or by hospital staff. We will continue to provide you the best care available.

Questions

We will be happy to answer any questions that you have about this test.