

Cardiac Calcium Scoring

RISKS

There is always a slight risk of damage from being exposed to any radiation, including the low levels of X-rays used for a CT Scan. However, the risk of damage from the x-rays is usually very low compared with the potential benefits of the test.


RESULTS

The results of the test will be sent to your doctor within 48 hours. Additionally, your results and information explaining those results will be mailed to your home. You are strongly encouraged to meet with your doctor to discuss these results and a potential plan of action, if indicated.

COST

Most insurance plans, including Medicare, do not cover cardiac calcium scoring. The cost of the procedure is \$125, which includes the radiologist's fee for interpreting the study.

To schedule a convenient appointment for cardiac calcium scoring call 402-5000.
Appointments are necessary.

 **ROPER
ST. FRANCIS**
HEART & VASCULAR CENTER

www.rsfh.com

HEALTHLINE 402-CARE



WHAT IS CARDIAC CALCIUM SCORING?

Cardiac calcium scoring (also called coronary artery calcium scoring) is a test that detects calcium deposits in the coronary arteries, which supply blood to the heart. Normally, the coronary arteries do not contain calcium. Calcium deposits in the coronary arteries may indicate the development or presence of coronary artery disease.

During cardiac calcium scoring a patient undergoes a short CT scan. The scanner directs a series of X-rays through the body that are analyzed by a computer to produce a detailed picture of a “slice” of the heart. Each X-ray pulse lasts only a fraction of a second and it takes only a few seconds for the machine to record each slice.

Cardiac calcium scoring is done to provide additional clinical information for diagnosing the early development of coronary artery disease and to determine its severity. Cardiac calcium scoring may be recommended by your doctor if you are a male over age 45 or a female over age 55 and have risk factors for coronary artery disease (CAD), but have no clinical symptoms such as chest discomfort or shortness of breath. The major risk factors for CAD are:

- Abnormally high blood cholesterol levels
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Overweight or obese
- Physical inactivity
- Family history of heart disease



HOW TO PREPARE

No special preparation is necessary in advance for a calcium scoring test. You may continue to take your usual medications, but avoid caffeine and smoking for four hours before having a cardiac calcium scoring test. Please tell your health professional if you are or might be pregnant.

TEST OVERVIEW

A cardiac calcium scoring test is performed by a radiologic technologist specially trained in CT operation. The resulting pictures are interpreted by a radiologist.

At the time of the test, you will be asked to undress above the waist, put on a gown and remove any jewelry that might interfere with the X-ray picture. If your heart rate is 90 beats per minute or higher, you may be given medication to slow your heart rate.

During the test, you will lie on your back on a table that is attached to the CT scanner. The CT scanner is an advanced specialized X-ray machine that is a common imaging tool used every day for a wide array of clinical tests. The table slides into the opening in the scanner while a cylinder around the opening rotates around your body. The table will move a small distance every few seconds to reposition you for each new “slice” of the scan. You may hear clicking or buzzing sounds as the table moves and the cylinder turns.

Small metal discs called electrodes will be attached to the skin on your chest. These are connected to an EKG machine that records the electrical activity of your heart. The EKG records when your heart is in the resting stage, which is the best time for the CT scans to be taken.

When your heart is in the resting stage, you will be asked to hold your breath for 15 to 20 seconds while about 200 images of your heart are taken. It is very important to hold completely still while your heart is being scanned. Otherwise, repeat scans may be needed.

During the test, you are usually alone in the scanner room. However, the technologist will watch you through an observation window and you will be able to talk to him or her through an intercom.

The scan takes only a few seconds to obtain the heart images, but you should allow 30 to 45 minutes for the entire examination.