

## CT Heart Scan That Could Save Your Life

### Quickly detects calcium-containing plaque in the arteries

Coronary heart disease is the main cause of death for men and women in the United States. Every year millions of people die of heart disease, a disease that can often be treated if detected early. A heart scan can detect heart disease and find problems early when chances for treatment and cure are better. Early detection may indicate the need for medication and lifestyle changes to reduce the risk of heart attack or other heart problems.

A CT heart scan is a non-invasive heart imaging test to determine if you have a build-up of calcium deposits in the coronary arteries. The heart scan, also known as a coronary calcium scan, is a specialized CT scan that provides pictures of your heart that can enable your doctor to identify and measure the calcium-containing plaque in the arteries.

The plaque inside the arteries of your heart can build up and eventually obstruct the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the muscles of the heart. Measurement of calcified plaque with a heart scan may enable your doctor to identify possible coronary artery disease long before you have any signs and symptoms.



Coronary artery disease (CAD) results in damage to the arteries which are primarily due to plaque and inflammation. Plaque deposits in and on the walls of coronary arteries can restrict the blood to the muscles of the heart. Plaque also may rupture, triggering a blood clot that can cause a heart attack or stroke. Plaque deposits develop gradually over a period of time, long before there are any signs or symptoms of a disease. The imaging test provides an early look at calcium levels. If there is calcium, then there is already some stiffening and narrowing of the artery (atherosclerosis).

We have a team of skilled doctors that specialize in preventive medicine, using state-of-the-art equipment and technology to detect many diseases before they start. As part of our diagnostic testing program, we use the Somatom Scope, the latest and fastest CT scanner in Los Cabos. It delivers outstanding image quality, reduces radiation dose by 40%, with the highest levels of quality and imagery, and can accurately measure the build-up of calcium deposits in the coronary arteries. The doctors and radiologists are highly experienced in supervising and interpreting radiology examinations and will analyze the images and discuss the results with you and prepare an official report for your primary care physician to review.

No special preparation is necessary in advance for your heart scan and you should continue to take your usual medications but avoid smoking and caffeine for four hours before the test. However, if your heart rate is above 65 beats a minute you must take medication 2 days before your test to slow your heart rate to ensure clear images. Before the actual scan begins, the technician will attach sensors to your chest. These are connected to an electrocardiogram, to record your heart activity during the test and coordinate the timing of X-ray images between heartbeats, when the heart muscles are more relaxed. After the scan, the doctor will review the results and discuss the best treatment plan for you. The entire procedure should take about 30 minutes, and afterward, you should be able to drive yourself home and continue normal daily activities.

Now is a good time to get a heart scan to determine your calcium score and your risk for heart attacks in the future. The total cost for the heart scan is under **\$600 US**. Contact the specialists for more information about the screening tests available.