

A computed tomography (CT) scan can detect calcified plaque in coronary arteries. And because this calcium-laced plaque is believed to be associated with the presence of heart disease, CT scans are being widely advertised and hyped at many medical centers. Mostly, the scans are aimed at the healthy as a new must-have "preventive" test.

The research, just published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, reveals there are huge differences in both scanner models and also in the techniques used to perform the coronary scan. That means the radiation dose can vary from test to test with one person receiving ten times the radiation another receives. What's most worrisome is that the body's vital organs and tissues are estimated to receive measurable radiation doses from CT scans. Specifically, the study authors point out that the breasts, lungs, thyroid, esophagus, bone surfaces and adrenal glands are exposed to potentially cancer-causing radiation from the heart test.

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