



Essential Imaging
BC PATIENT SAFETY & QUALITY COUNCIL

CT Scans to Find a Blood Clot in The Lungs: A Guide for Essential Imaging

Recommendation: “Chest CT for suspected pulmonary embolism is not recommended in low-risk patients with a normal D-dimer result.”¹

The BC Patient Safety & Quality Council has put together these Essential Imaging Conversation Guides for Care Providers to support and guide conversation with patients, based on the *BC Guidelines for Appropriate Imaging*.¹

“Practitioners are reminded to consider risk factors that might alter the pre-test probability. This strategy applies to most people and does not account for unique risk factors (e.g., anabolic steroids, athletes, elderly, paraplegics, etc.). If patients have persistent symptoms beyond 24–48 hours, they should return to the emergency department for further assessment.”¹

Patients who are not aware of the risks and recommendations may request imaging. Here are some messages to inform and guide your conversations with patients requesting imaging for suspected pulmonary embolism.¹



Provide Information²

If imaging is not indicated, inform patients that:

- CT scans come with some risk.²
- A CT scan is a machine that uses large doses of radiation to take pictures of bone, organs or soft tissues. CT scans looking for a PE also use dye that can cause damage to kidneys or cause an allergic reaction.
- If chances of having a PE is low, a CT scan will not help patients feel better more quickly.
- Patients can learn more about essential imaging by reading the *Conversation Guide for Patients - CT for Suspected PE*.



Provide Advice

Talk to your patient about what they can do to encourage recovery, including:²

- Continuing usual activities without over-exerting
- Using medications as instructed by health care providers
- If symptoms persist or change then patients should visit a health care provider

Did You Know?

“For low risk adult patients: Do not order imaging (CT pulmonary angiogram) or ventilation-perfusion lung scan for pulmonary embolism in those with a normal D-dimer result.

For high risk adult patients: Start empiric treatment with anticoagulant therapy if confirmatory imaging is not immediately available.”¹

When in doubt, consult with radiology in your local community or through the RACE Line: [raceconnect.ca](https://www.raceconnect.ca)

Start the Conversation!

Learn more and find additional clinical resources at [BCPSQC.ca/imaging](https://www.bcpsqc.ca/imaging).

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