



The Clatterbridge
Cancer Centre
NHS Foundation Trust

Having a nuclear medicine scan

Imaging



A guide for patients and carers

Contents

What is a nuclear medicine scan?.....	1
What is radiation?	2
Do I need to make any special preparations for the scan?	3
About your scan	3
After your scan	4
Any more questions?	5

This information is for patients undergoing a nuclear medicine scan.

Your doctor has arranged for you to have a nuclear medicine scan at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre NHS Foundation Trust in Wirral. We are the only nuclear medicine department on the Wirral to provide this service for all Wirral hospitals and some GP practices.

This leaflet will provide information about the scan including:

- What is a nuclear medicine scan?
- What is radiation?
- Do I need to make any special preparations for the scan?
- About your scan
- After your scan



What is a nuclear medicine scan?

Nuclear medicine scans are used to show how particular organs or tissues are working. A small injection of radioactivity is given to the patient before the scan. This injection gives off radiation which enables scan pictures to be taken using a machine called a 'gamma camera'. These pictures will give your doctor more information about your condition.

More about the injection.....

When you arrive for your appointment, an injection will be given - usually through a vein in your arm. This is similar to having a blood test and will only take a few minutes. You will not feel any different after the injection; it will not make you sleepy or affect your driving. Depending on the type of scan you are receiving, you may need to wait up to a few hours for the injection to be absorbed by your body before the scan pictures are taken.



Nuclear medicine procedures are time-consuming, and the radioactive material used is pre-ordered specifically for you from a radio-pharmacy outside of our hospital. As the order is made the day before your appointment (or Friday for the following Monday), it is very important that you let us know as soon as possible if you are unable to attend your appointment.

What is radiation?

Radiation is a form of energy which occurs widely in nature and can also be man-made.

We are all exposed to naturally-occurring sources of radiation in our day to day lives, such as from radioactivity in buildings, rocks and soil or cosmic radiation during an aeroplane trip.

In nuclear medicine, we use man-made radioactivity to help diagnose illnesses. The injected radioactivity will disappear from your body quite rapidly; most of it will have gone within a few hours after the scan.

Will I receive much radiation?

No, the amount of radiation you receive is small, similar to that of some x-ray examinations and typically similar to what you would receive from natural background radiation over one to two years. The expected benefits of the scan outweigh any possible radiation risks. The radiographers in nuclear medicine are highly trained to keep your radiation dose to the minimum necessary.

Do I need to make any special preparations for the scan?

Usually, you do not need to prepare specially for the scan. In most cases you can eat and drink as normal. For some scans, however, you may need to make certain preparations, so please check your appointment letter for any specific instructions related to your scan.

Please carry on taking your usual regular tablets and medicines. If we need you to stop taking a particular drug, we will let you know.



You will not need to undress for the scan but you may be requested to remove some items such as belts, shoes and jewellery.

About your scan

What the scan involves

The radiographer will take pictures with a machine called a 'gamma camera'. You may be sitting on a chair or lying on a bed with the camera close by. The scan may take anything from twenty minutes to one and a half hours.



What about my friends and family?

You may bring a companion with you but waiting space is limited. Please do not bring children or pregnant women with you.

Although the radiation risk to others is very small, to reduce unnecessary radiation exposure, you should avoid close contact with children and pregnant women for the rest of the day. Close contact means having a child sitting on your lap, or next to you, for more than half an hour.

Ladies

It is very important that we give special consideration before carrying out this scan if you are, or think you may be, pregnant. If this is the case, please contact us in advance as it may be necessary to delay your appointment.

There is no need to avoid pregnancy after having had a nuclear medicine scan.

Breast feeding

Radioactive substances can come out in breast milk so, if you are breast feeding, please contact us in advance. This is so we can advise you on the precautions you may need to take after the scan.

Where do I wait?

Depending on the type of scan you are receiving, you may need to wait up to a few hours for the injection to be absorbed by your body before the scan pictures are taken.

If you are an outpatient, you can wait in the nuclear medicine waiting room where there is a television and a drinks machine. You may want to bring a book or magazine and a packed lunch. Alternatively, you will be allowed to go for a drive or go home if you want to.

After your scan

Following your scan, you can go home or return to work. If you are an inpatient, you will be returned to your ward.

For the first 24 hours after your scan, we will ask you to:

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Flush the toilet twice after use and remember to wash your hands
- Avoid contact with babies and small children
- Avoid giving any samples of tissue, blood and urine for other tests



When will I get the results?

After you leave the department, the nuclear medicine doctor will write a report on your scan. The doctor who referred you for the scan will then receive the report usually within a week to discuss the results with you.

Any more questions?

To ensure that your visit to our department is as pleasant as possible, please feel free to ask any of the staff any questions you may have before, during or after the scan. You can contact our Imaging reception on 0151 556 5057.

Please note, we provide nuclear medicine services for all areas in Wirral. Our patients can be referred for investigation of a wide range of conditions, not just cancer related conditions.

If appropriate, for general information you can contact the Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Helpline on 0151 556 5570.

Please also note that the information in this leaflet applies to nuclear medicine scans carried out in the Imaging Department at Clatterbridge Cancer Centre - Wirral.

If you have tests performed elsewhere or receive treatment (therapy) with radioactive materials, you should receive separate information relevant to those procedures.

How we produce our information

All of our leaflets are produced by staff at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre and this information is not sponsored or influenced in any way. Every effort is made to ensure that the information included in this leaflet is accurate and complete and we hope that it will add to any professional advice you have had. All our leaflets are evidence based where appropriate and they are regularly reviewed and updated. If you are concerned about your health in any way, you should consult your healthcare team.

We rely on a number of sources to gather evidence for our information. All of our information is in line with accepted national or international guidelines where possible. Where no guidelines exist, we rely on other reliable sources such as systematic reviews, published clinical trials data or a consensus review of experts. We also use medical textbooks, journals and government publications.

References for this leaflet can be obtained by telephoning 0151 556 5570.

If you need this leaflet in large print, Braille, audio or different language, please call 0151 556 5570.

If you have a comment, concern, compliment or complaint, please call 0151 556 5203.

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