Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Having a Nuclear Medicine Scan

Patient information leaflet

If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس‌پذیر نیاز دارید،
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie,
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أُخرى، أو بتنسيق
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

Author: Radiology Quality & Accreditation Lead
Department: Radiology
Document Number: MWL2573
Version: 001
Review Date: 31/03/2028

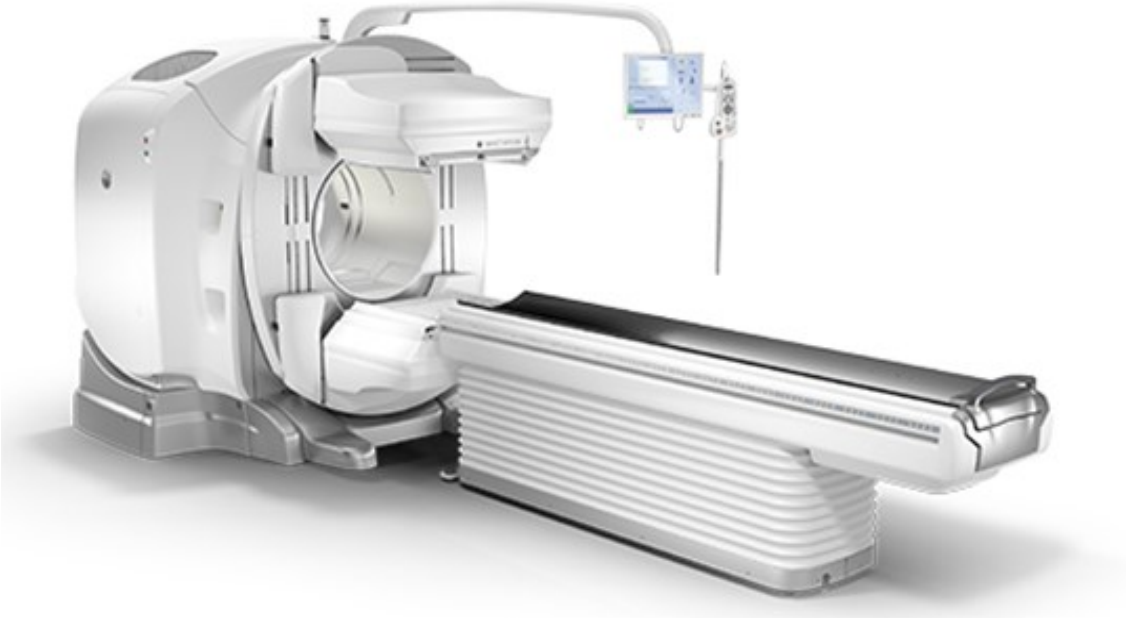
Introduction

This leaflet aims to inform you on having a Nuclear Medicine Scan. It explains how the test is performed, what to expect, and what the possible risks are. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to your doctor or speak to the Nuclear Medicine staff.

What is a Nuclear Medicine scan?

A Nuclear Medicine scan involves the introduction of a small amount of a radioactive tracer into your body usually by injection into a vein. The tracer is taken up by the area of the body being examined, for example your bones or heart muscle.

This allows us to use a special camera, a Gamma camera, to detect the radioactivity and perform your examination. The radioactive tracer is ordered especially for you and failure to attend may mean a costly waste.



Preparation for your scan

Any preparation for your scan will be explained on your appointment letter, but if you have any questions do not hesitate to contact the department on the number in the letter.

Depending on the examination, there may be a delay in between the injection and the time of your actual scan. Your appointment letter will give an indication if you will be required to return later for your scan following the injection at your original appointment time.

Your scan

Before the scan you may be asked to go to the toilet to empty your bladder. In most cases you will not need to get undressed, but you will be asked to remove any metal objects like braces, jewellery and belts before you lie on the bed of the scanner.

A Radiographer will perform your scan. You will be asked to lie on your back on a special couch. The scans usually take about 20-30 minutes, and it is very important that you keep still during this time. If you think that you will find this difficult, please speak to the Nuclear Medicine Department before your appointment.

To get extra information, we sometimes need additional pictures. These will either be performed using a combination of images from the injection and a CT scan, or you being sent for some regular x-rays. This will happen after your initial scan and may add a further 10- 15 minutes to the time you are with us. Very occasionally for some scans, you may be contacted to come back for x-rays on another day when the doctor has looked at your images.

After your scan

You may continue all your normal activities unless you have been advised otherwise.
After your scan there will be some radioactivity left in your body, but this will not present a significant risk to other people around you. However, for the rest of the day, we suggest that you try restricting any prolonged time spent near pregnant individuals, babies and small children.

The radioactivity in your body will soon disappear, but if you drink plenty of liquids this will help clear the radioactivity more quickly. If you are concerned about the radioactivity please contact the department.

If you are planning on travelling abroad in the days following your scan, many airports and seaports are now equipped with very sensitive radiation detectors so despite it being perfectly safe for you to travel abroad after your scan, it is possible that the very small amount of radioactivity left in your body could set off a detector as you pass through security. Therefore, it could be helpful to take something to explain that you have recently had a nuclear medicine scan.

Please feel free to discuss this with the staff when you attend for your appointment. i.e. your appointment letter.

Risks

Are there any risks?

For this scan it is necessary to inject a small amount of a radioactive tracer, called a radiopharmaceutical, in order to take the pictures. The small risk from this is outweighed by the information that will be gained by taking the scan. A doctor will have checked the request to make sure this is the appropriate test for you. If you have any concerns or would like further information, please contact the department where you are having your nuclear medicine scan. If you do not understand why you need to have this scan, please speak to the doctor who referred you.

https://www.ukhsa-protectionservices.org.uk/radiationandyou/



Pregnancy

If you are, or think you could be pregnant, please contact us prior to your appointment on the phone number in your appointment letter.

Breast feeding

If you are currently breast feeding, please contact the department for further advice.

Extravasation

Occasionally when you have an injection there is a small risk that the injection of the tracer can leak out of the vein and under the skin. This is called an extravasation. We find this occurs in 1 out of 200 injections. If this does happen then further advice will be given to you by the Radiographer and Radiologist at the time of the procedure.

Notes

Finally

The pictures taken during the examination are studied carefully and a detailed report is produced. The results will be sent to the person who referred you for the test. They will discuss the results with you and any treatment you may need.

You may already have an appointment with the team who referred you. If not, please contact them to arrange one to discuss the results of this test.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to call the Radiology Department via the number given on your appointment letter.

As this is a teaching hospital there may be students and observers present during your examination as part of their ongoing training. Please let the staff know if you do not wish any students to be present during your attendance.

Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road,
Prescot,
Merseyside,
L35 5DR
Telephone:
0151 426 1600

St Helens Hospital
Marshalls Cross Road,
St Helens,
Merseyside,
WA9 3DA
Telephone:
01744 26633

Southport Hospital
Town Lane,
Kew,
Southport,
Merseyside,
PR8 6PNT
Telephone:
01704 547 471

Ormskirk Hospital
Wigan Road
Ormskirk,
L39 2AZ
Telephone:
01695 577 111