

DEPARTMENT OF RADIOLOGY Lister Hospital

Nuclear Medicine

What is a Nuclear Medicine Scan?

It is a specialised procedure using a small amount of a radioactive tracer, which allows us to investigate the bones or organs of the body, using a Gamma Camera linked to a computer.

What happens during the procedure?

- The person who carries out the examination is a qualified radiographer whose specialty is Nuclear Medicine. They will explain the procedure and you will have an opportunity to ask them questions.
- The radioactive tracer is given by intravenous injection, usually into the arm or the back of the hand. The injection takes only a few minutes.
- Depending on the type of scan, the images may be taken immediately after the injection or after a delay; this will be indicated on the appointment letter.
- If there is a delay between the injection and the scan, you may leave the hospital. During this time you may also eat and drink as normal.
- During the scan, you will be required to lie or sit with the Gamma Camera positioned near you. You will need to keep very still as movement will blur the images.
- You are not completely closed in during the scan and staff will be with you in the room at all times.
- The time taken for the scan will vary according to the area being scanned. Bone scans, for example, will take about 45 minutes. You will feel no ill-effects from the scan and it will not be painful.
- Please be aware that occasionally emergency cases arise which cause unavoidable delays to booked patients.

Are there any special preparations?

Before you come to the hospital, eat and drink normally and continue to take any prescribed medicine. If there is anything specific you need to do in preparation for your scan, details will be included in your appointment letter. Normally you will not be required to undress for your Nuclear Medicine Scan, but you may be asked to remove any metallic items, shoes and belts.

Are there any precautions?

- You will be mildly radioactive for 24 hours after the injection and should avoid close contact with children and pregnant women for the first 6 hours after the injection.
- You should also avoid undergoing any other procedures outside of the Radiology Department on the day of your scan.

Are you pregnant?

If you are, or think you may be, pregnant, please inform the department of this before you come for your examination. Like X-ray examinations, Nuclear Medicine scans involve radiation and are best avoided during pregnancy.

Are you breastfeeding?

You are advised not to breast feed for 24 hours after the scan. Please inform the department beforehand, so alternative arrangements can be discussed with you.

Are there any risks?

- The radioactive tracer gives off a small amount of energy in the form of gamma rays, which are similar to X-rays. There are small risks associated with being exposed to radiation, however the radiation quickly decays and the total amount of radiation involved is kept as low as possible.
- The substances we inject are non-toxic and will not make you feel sick or drowsy.
- We are all exposed to natural radiation from the environment. Each Nuclear Medicine scan gives a small additional dose on top of this natural background radiation. The level of the dose varies from the equivalent of a few days to the equivalent of a few years of natural radiation, depending on the examination. Additional radiation may very slightly increase the risk of, for example, developing a cancer, however, such an increase is very small.

What are the benefits?

The benefits from making the right diagnosis, and consequently giving you the right treatment, outweigh any small risk involved. Indeed the risk to your health from not having the examination is likely to be much greater than that from the radiation itself.

After the Scan

You may eat normally and should drink more fluids than normal for the rest of the day.

Please note:

The radioactive tracer required for this examination is ordered especially for you. If you are not able to attend, please let the department know **as soon as possible** so that it can be used for someone else. A relative or a friend may accompany you to the department, but they will not be allowed into the clinical or scanning rooms. For radiation safety reasons children **should not** be brought to the Nuclear Medicine Department.

When will I receive my results?

The Consultant Radiologist, a doctor who specialises in Nuclear Medicine, will study the images and send a report directly to the doctor who referred you for the scan.

Questions?

If you have any questions concerning this procedure, please ring the Radiology department between 9am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday on 01438 284859. Outside these hours you can leave a message on our answer phone and we will call you back on the next working day.

01438 281030, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Public Transport

Please visit www.intalink.org.uk or phone 0300 123 4050 for details of bus and train routes, timetables and fares.

Health Shuttle

Door to door journeys to Lister can be booked on the Health Shuttle from certain areas. Please phone 01438 726219 for fares and details.

Feedback

The Radiology Department welcomes feedback on our service and our information leaflets. Alternatively you may wish to contact the Patients Advice & Liaison Service.

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel no: 01438 284779 (Lister)
01707 229045 (QEII & HCH Hospitals)