

Thyroid scan

Patient information factsheet

What is a Nuclear Medicine Scan?

- A nuclear medicine scan is a very common medical procedure.
- It uses small amounts of radioactive materials to highlight a specific organ.
- This helps your Doctor diagnose (find the problem) and, in some cases, treat a number of diseases.
- The scan uses a gamma camera to look for signs of disease.
- It shows the Doctor how well your organs are working. Other types of scans show what your organs look like.

What is a Thyroid Scan?

- A nuclear medicine thyroid scan uses a radioactive medication (radiopharmaceutical) to take pictures or images of the thyroid gland.
- The radiopharmaceutical is injected into a vein, usually in the arm, and enters the thyroid gland from the circulating blood.
- A special gamma camera takes images and provides information about the function and structure of the thyroid gland.
- Your doctor may refer you for a nuclear medicine thyroid scan if it is believed parts of your thyroid gland are not working properly.
- The scan will tell us whether the thyroid gland is overactive (hyperthyroidism).
- It can also help in distinguishing between benign (non-cancerous) and malignant (cancerous) thyroid nodules or lumps.

Do I have to do anything to prepare for this procedure?

- Yes. Thyroid medications should be stopped as follows (please inform your Endocrinologist):
 - **Carbimazole:** 3 days prior
 - **T4/Thyroxine:** 4 weeks prior
 - **Prophythiouracil:** 1 week prior
 - **T3/Triiodothyronine:** 2 weeks prior
- Please call us to let us know if you recently had any nuclear medicine treatment or any other imaging procedures which required administration of contrast which contained Iodine, for example a Computerised Tomography (CT) scan with contrast.
- Avoid using Iodised salt (table salt fortified with trace amount of iodine).
- Avoid eating shellfish 24 hours before your appointment.

What happens on the day of the scan?

On arrival

- A radioactive tracer will be injected in a vein which allows us to see your thyroid glands under our special camera.
- You must drink at least two cups of water before your scan.

20 minutes after injection

- You will be asked to come back at this time so we can scan your thyroids.
- The scan can take up to 30 minutes.
- While you are lying down, the camera will be positioned over you and will be moved very close to your face during the scan.
- Please let us know if you are claustrophobic.
- It is important that you keep still during imaging.

Is it dangerous?

- The scans are safe and painless.
- Because a small amount of radioactive tracer is used, there is only a very small risk of radiation exposure.
- If you have any worries or questions about the scan, please talk to your Doctor or contact the Nuclear Medicine department.

Are there any precautions?

- Please tell the Nuclear Medicine Technologist or Radiographer if you might be pregnant or are breastfeeding before you come to your appointment.
- **You might need to stop breastfeeding for a short time after your scan.**
- Please tell us if you are very afraid of needles (needle phobia), feel anxious in small spaces (claustrophobia), or cannot lie down flat.

What happens after the scan?

- Drink lots of water.
- The radioactive tracer leaves your body through your pee (urine). Drinking lots of water will help get rid of it faster.
- **Do not have any blood or urine tests for 24 hours after your scan because the radioactive tracer may still be in your body.**

How do I get my result?

- A Radiologist reviews (looks at) the scan and sends the report to the Specialist Doctor who asked for it. They will then contact you directly.
- This can take about 2 to 3 weeks.

Is there anything else I should know?

- You will need to lie down flat and stay still during the scan. Moving can make the pictures unclear.
- The scan can take anywhere from 15 to 60 minutes. This will depend on the type of procedure you are having.
- A CT scan (computerized tomography) might be done at the same time as your nuclear medicine scan to give us extra information.
- **Please do not bring anyone with you who is pregnant or under 18 years old.** This is because there are radioactive materials in the department.
- **We do not allow anyone under 18** to interpret for patients.
- If you need an interpreter, please tell the Nuclear Medicine department, and they will arrange one for you.

Contact our service

Email: whh-tr.nuclearmedwhitthealth@nhs.net

Monday to Thursday, 9 am to 5 pm: 020 7288 5517.

Friday: Please call our mobile on 07747 037 143.

Contact our Trust

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on **020 7288 5551** or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net.

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet, please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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