

Lymph 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 Lymph Scan?

- Your lymphatic system is a group of organs, vessels and tissues that protect you from infection and keep a healthy balance of fluids in your body.
- A lymphoscintigraphy (lymph scan) helps evaluate your body's lymphatic system for disease.
- It uses small amounts of radioactive materials called radiotracers that are injected into the skin.
- The radiotracer travels through the area being examined and gives off energy in the form of gamma rays.
- These rays are detected by a special camera, and a computer creates images of the inside of your body. Because it can pinpoint molecular activity within the body, a lymphoscintigraphy is able to identify lymphatic disease in its earliest stages.

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

- No. You can take your medications and eat/drink normally before this procedure.

What happens on the day of the scan?

On arrival

- A small injection of a radioactive tracer will be injected between the toes or the fingers using a very fine needle.
- This injection will help us see the lymphatic system in either your arms or legs.
- A series of images will be taken immediately after this injection whilst you lie down flat on our scanning bed.
- This first set of images lasts about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

2 hours after

- Another set of images will be taken at this time, also lasting about 45 minutes to 1 hour.
- A 4-hour image maybe needed, and you will be told about this on the day of your test.

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.
- **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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