

# Sentinel Node 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 Sentinel Node Scan?

- A Sentinel Node Scan is a test to identify the first lymph node that drains your tumour (this is called the sentinel node).
- A small amount of radioactivity is injected under the skin close to the relevant area to guide your Surgeon in locating this lymph node during your surgery.
- The amount of radiation you receive is as small as possible and is similar to other X-ray procedures.
- The radioactivity leaves the body very quickly and it will not make you feel sick or sleepy.

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

- No preparation is needed for this test.
- You may take your medications and eat normally.
- However, if you are having surgery, you may be required to fast.

## What happens on the day of the scan?

### On arrival

- A small injection of a radioactive tracer will be injected to a specific area close to the affected site.
- This injection will help locate the Sentinel Node.
- A series of images will be taken immediately after this injection.
- The scan may last up to 20 minutes.
- Sometimes, the surgeon may not require images to be taken and just require the radioactive injection.

### Delayed Imaging

- Occasionally you may have to return for another scan if the sentinel node is not seen in the first scan.
- This may take another 20 minutes.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your needs.

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## Document information

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