

Patient Brochure

Nuclear Medicine

What is Nuclear Medicine?

Nuclear Medicine is a branch of diagnostic imaging that uses very small amounts of radioactive material, or tracer, to provide information about the function or structure of particular organs such as your heart, lungs, bones or liver. The radioactive material localises in specific parts of your body and emits radiation. The radiation is detected by a gamma camera and a computer processes the images. Nuclear Medicine allows doctors to make a relatively quick, accurate diagnosis regarding a wide range of medical and surgical conditions.

Is Nuclear Medicine safe?

The amount of radioactive material used is very small and the radiation dose is similar to that of diagnostic x-ray tests. Most of the radioactive material leaves the body through the urine. Any retained material loses its radioactivity relatively quickly through breakdown (decay). There are little or no side-effects from the radioactive tracer. There is only a very small chance of an allergic reaction to the material. Please tell the Nuclear Medicine Technologist or the doctor of any allergies prior to your examination.

What preparation is required?

Generally preparation is not required, but occasionally you will be asked to fast for 2-4 hours prior to the scan that is being done. Our staff will provide you with information regarding any necessary preparation and will give you specific instructions prior to your scan. Unless otherwise stated, you may drink and eat as usual.

It is recommended that you check with either your referring doctor or our bookings staff if you take your usual medications prior to a scan of your heart.

What is a Nuclear Medicine scan like?

The test will be performed by a Nuclear Medicine Technologist. You will usually receive an injection of a small amount of radioactive material into a vein in your arm. Depending on the procedure you may need to inhale or ingest the material. Some initial images may be taken with the gamma camera during and just after the injection.

After the injection, you are encouraged to drink plenty of fluids to facilitate the clearing of the radioactive material from your body through urine. In the interval between imaging, you are free to leave the department. You will usually be asked to return later (the time will vary between 2-6 hours) for further imaging. Our staff will advise you of the delay between images when you make your appointment. Completing the second series of images usually takes approximately 30-60 minutes.

What happens after the Nuclear Medicine scan?

Following completion of your scan, the Nuclear Medicine Imaging Specialist will report on the images.

Can I have a Nuclear Medicine Scan?

If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, please inform your referring doctor so this can be discussed with the Nuclear Medicine Imaging Specialist. It is also important that you advise us if you are breastfeeding so that we can determine if it's safe for you to have a scan.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR MEDICARE CARD AND REFERRAL FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

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