

PET/CT scan

PATIENT INFORMATION - What You Need to Know

DESCRIPTION OF EXAM

A PET/CT scan is a hybrid Nuclear Medicine and CT imaging procedure that allows a radiologist to evaluate the presence and staging of cancer. It is also less commonly used to determine the source of infection.

PREPARING FOR YOUR EXAM - What to do before your exam:

Patient must be NPO (nothing to eat or drink) for 5 hours before the exam. Patients cannot chew gum or candy even if it is sugar less. Medications are okay to take, just as long as they are not: steroids or any diabetic medications. No insulin dextrose or glucose should be taken for 5 hours before exam. Patients should avoid any strenuous exercise for 24 hours before the exam. Patient should not be pregnant. If patient is breastfeeding please notify technologist at the time of exam. Wear comfortable clothing, women are advised to wear sports bras without metal clips, and avoid wearing jewelry and metallic objects in the area that will be examined. Arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled exam time to allow for registration.

If the patient is claustrophobic: the patient can take medication before the exam if provided to them by their referring physician but we ask that the patient should wait until till they get into the injection room before taking medication.

DURING THE EXAM

The patient will be taken into a private injection room. The technologist will give the patient a finger stick to check their blood sugar level. The patient will then receive a radioactive injection. The patient will wait 1hr in the private room for the injection to circulate. It is not recommended that a family member or friend wait with you for the hour due to the patient being radioactive. Exceptions are made for children and the handicapped. While the patient is waiting the technologist will give them Barium contrast to drink. After the hour the technologist will bring the patient to the restroom to change any metal clothing (including bra if metal clips are present) and empty their bladder. The patient then lies on the camera and is positioned. Depending on the patient and area of interest, the patient can lie with arms behind head or arms by their sides. The camera looks similar to a CT scanner. The first 2 minutes of the scan a quick CT is performed. The table will move in and out of the circular tube 3-4 times. Once the CT is completed it will move onto the PET portion. The patient will move though the tube again in slow increments. Scan time ranges from 25 minutes to 35mins, and during that time the patient needs to hold perfectly still. After the exam the patient will be taken back to the bathroom and can change back into their regular clothes and bra. The whole length of the exam from injection to end of scan is about 1.5- 2 hours.

AFTER YOUR EXAM

Drink plenty of fluids after your exam to help wash out the radioactive tracer from the body more quickly. There are no side effects from the radioactive tracer. The amount of radioactivity you receive is very small amount and is not harmful to you or anyone else. If breastfeeding, it is recommended to pump milk and discard for 12 hours after exam.