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Liver/Spleen Nuclear Medicine Scan

About your procedure

This handout explains what to expect when having a liver/spleen nuclear medicine scan at UW Medical Center - Montlake.

What is a liver/spleen scan?

A liver/spleen scan checks for health problems in the liver and spleen. It is a form of radiology, because radiation is used to take the pictures of the inside of your body.

How does it work?

You will be given a small dose of radioactive *tracer*. This tracer collects in your liver and spleen and gives off gamma rays. A gamma camera detects the rays and creates images that show how your liver and spleen are working.



A gamma camera

How do I prepare?

- You may eat your regular diet.
- If you cannot lie still for about 1 hour, you may need a *sedative* (medicine to make you relax) for this scan. Talk with your provider if you have concerns about lying still for that long.
- *If you were assigned female at birth:* Tell your provider if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or think you might be pregnant.

How is the scan done?

- We will give you a small dose of tracer through an *intravenous* (IV) line in a vein in your arm.
- Imaging will start 15 minutes after you receive the tracer. At this time, we will ask you to lie flat on an exam table. The technologist will help make you comfortable.
- The gamma camera will first scan your entire body. It will then take a SPECT (*single photon emission tomography*) scan. This scan creates 3D images of your liver and spleen. During a SPECT scan, the camera rotates around your body.

- A low-dose *computed tomography* (CT) scan may be done at the same time as the SPECT scan. If a CT scan is done, the technologist will tell you how to breathe during the scan.
- You must not move while the camera is taking pictures. If you move, the pictures will be blurry and may have to be done over.
- We may also do a whole body scan.
- The entire scan may take up to 1½ hours.

Radiation Oncology Patients

- You will meet with your Radiation Oncology team before your scan. The team will decide what position you will hold during the scan.
- Your scan will be done on a planning table attached to the camera bed. This table is harder than a standard exam bed.
- After you receive the injection of the tracer, the Radiation Oncology team will help position you on the planning table.
- Your imaging session will include the SPECT/CT and whole body scans. The technologist will tell you how to breathe during the scan.
- The entire scan may take up to 1½ hours.

What will I feel during the scan?

- You may feel some minor discomfort from the IV in your arm.
- Some people find it hard to lie still on the exam table.

After the Scan

- *If you had sedation:* You will need a responsible adult take you home. This person can drive you or ride with you on a bus, Uber, or taxi.
- Drink plenty of water to help your body get rid of the tracer. Most of it will quickly leave your body in your urine or stool. The rest will go away over time.

Your Results

After your test, the nuclear medicine doctor will review your images, write a report, and talk with your provider about your results. Your own provider will talk with you the results of your scan.

You and your provider will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

You may also read your results on your MyChart page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- Fred Hutch Cancer Center Nuclear Medicine: 206.606.7045
- Fred Hutch Cancer Center PET Clinic: 206.606.7191
- Harborview Nuclear Medicine: 206.744.4473