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Lung V/Q Scan

What to expect and how to prepare

This handout explains a lung ventilation and perfusion (V/Q) scan. It includes how to prepare, what to expect, and how to get your results.

What is a lung V/Q scan?

V/Q stands for *ventilation* and *perfusion*. A lung V/Q scan shows how well your lungs are working. It is a nuclear medicine exam that uses a radioactive *tracer* to detect and treat disease. It is a form of radiology because radiation is used to take pictures of your body.

You must have this scan if you are being assessed for a surgery such as a lung transplant or *lobectomy*.

How does the scan work?

You will be given 2 kinds of tracers.

- You will inhale the 1st tracer. It will show how air flows in your lungs.
- We will inject the 2nd tracer through an *intravenous* (IV) line in your arm vein. This tracer will show blood flow in your lungs.



A gamma camera

The tracers collect in your lungs and give off *gamma rays*. A *gamma camera* detects the rays and then produces images of your lungs.

How do I prepare?

Tell your provider if you are pregnant.

On Scan Day

You may eat and drink as usual. Do your normal activities.

If You Are of Childbearing Age

Before the tracer is injected:

- Tell the technologist if there is **any** chance you may be pregnant.
- We will ask if you are breastfeeding.
- We will again confirm that there is no chance you are pregnant.

What to Expect

- We will place an IV line into your arm vein.
- We will give you a *nebulizer* that contains a small amount of tracer. A nebulizer is a device that changes a liquid into a fine mist. The technologist will teach you how to use the device.
- You will breathe through the nebulizer for 3 to 4 minutes. As you breathe in through your mouth, the tracer mist enters your lungs.
- You will then lie down on a table with the gamma camera above you. The technologist will help you get comfortable.
- The technologist will then take pictures of your lungs. You must lie still when the camera is taking pictures. If you move, the images will be blurry and may have to be repeated.
- Next, the technologist will inject the 2nd tracer into the IV. They will then take more pictures.

What will I feel during and after the scan?

- The scan may take 30 to 60 minutes. Lying still on the exam table may be hard for some people.
- You may have some minor discomfort from the IV.

What happens to the radioactive tracer?

Drink plenty of water for 24 hours after your scan to help your body get rid of the tracer. Most of it will leave your body in your urine or stool. The rest will go away over time.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

When the test is over, the nuclear medicine doctor will review your images and write up a report. They will then share the results with your provider who referred you for this test.

Your provider will give you the results. 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
- UWMC - Northwest Imaging Services: 206.598.4240
- Fred Hutch Cancer Center Nuclear Medicine: 206.606.7045
- Fred Hutch Cancer Center PET Clinic: 206.606.7191
- Harborview Nuclear Medicine: 206.744.4473