

Parathyroid Scan

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how parathyroid scan works, what to expect, what you may feel during the scan, and how to get your results.



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What is the parathyroid?

The *parathyroid* is a gland next to the thyroid. It secretes a hormone that regulates calcium levels in a person's body.

What is a parathyroid scan?

A *parathyroid scan* is a nuclear medicine exam that uses a radioactive tracer to diagnose problems in the parathyroid. It is a radiology exam, because radiation is used to take pictures of the body.

How does it work?

An *intravenous* (IV) line will be placed in your arm vein. You will be given a small dose of tracer through the IV. This tracer will collect in the parathyroid and give off *gamma rays*.



A gamma camera

A *gamma camera* will detect the rays and send images to a computer. The computer will create pictures of your parathyroid tissue.

How do I prepare for the scan?

- Tell your provider if you cannot lie still for 30 minutes at a time. You may need to be given a *sedative* (medicine to make you relax).
- Tell your provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

On Scan Day

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

- You will be given a small dose of a tracer through your IV.
- Right after you receive the tracer, the technologist will use the gamma camera to take 3 pictures. This will take 15 minutes.
- You will have more pictures taken 1 hour later and again 2 hours later. Each of these sets of pictures will take 30 minutes.
- Between the 2nd and 3rd sets of pictures:
 - The gamma camera will be used to take a SPECT (*single photon emission computed tomography*) scan. This scan provides 3D images of your parathyroid. During this scan, the camera will rotate around your body. This scan will take about 30 minutes.
 - A low-dose *computed tomography* (CT) scan will be done at the same time as the SPECT scan.
- Plan to be at the hospital for 3 to 4 hours for all scans to be done.

What will I feel during the scan?

- During the scan, you will need to lie flat on your back on an exam table. Lying still may be hard for some people.
- Each time the camera takes a set of pictures, you must hold very still. If you move, the pictures will be blurry and may have to be done over. The technologist will help make you comfortable. You will be able to get up between imaging sets.
- You may have some minor discomfort from the IV in your arm.

How long does the tracer stay in my body?

Drink plenty of water for 24 hours after your scans 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?

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

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

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

Questions?

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

- UWMC Nuclear Medicine/Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- Harborview Nuclear Medicine: 206.744.4473
- UWMC - Northwest Imaging Services: 206.598.4240