

Patient information leaflet

Thyroid scan

Radiology department

Introduction

We hope this guide will answer your questions about your thyroid scan. Please contact the team if you require further information via the details at the end of this leaflet.

What is a thyroid scan?

A thyroid scan is a test where a small amount of radioactive tracer (a radioactive solution often known as radiotracer or radioactive isotope) is injected into the bloodstream.

The radiotracer travels through the area being examined and gives off radiation in the form of gamma rays. This is detected by a special gamma camera and a computer to create images of your thyroid.

This scan is often used to show the size, shape and position of the thyroid gland, as well as the function.

Why do I need a thyroid scan?

You are having this examination as it will help your doctor to decide on the cause of your symptoms. This procedure will give clearer information to the clinicians treating you.

What are the associated risks?

The amount of radioactive tracer used to take the pictures is very small and the radioactivity is short lived.

The risk is outweighed by the benefit from the information that is gained by having the scan. A doctor will have checked the request to make sure this is the optimal test before we contact you.

This procedure involves receiving a dose of a radioactive tracer, this does not have any known side effects and does not make you feel drowsy.

Preparing for your procedure

Please avoid Shellfish and Iodine supplements at least one week before your thyroid scan.

Medication

Please contact the department if you are taking any thyroid medication before your appointment, as it may be necessary for you to stop taking this up to two - four weeks prior to your scan.

(Contact details are found at the end of this leaflet).

Pregnancy

If you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant, or are breastfeeding, please tell the radiographer **before** your appointment date, as we may need to postpone the scan or give special instructions with regard to breastfeeding.

Getting to us

The Princess Alexandra Hospital (Hamstel Road, Harlow, Essex, CM20 1QX), follow the signage to the radiology reception, which is located on the ground floor, green zone. Please let the receptionists know that you have arrived for your appointment.

When should I arrive?

Please arrive in the radiology department at the time arranged with the nuclear medicine department when booking your appointment.

You may receive an appointment letter in the post and this may be followed up with a text confirmation.

Can someone stay with me in the hospital?

You are able to have a friend or relative attend with you, as long as they are not young children or pregnant; however, due to ionising radiation regulations, only patients are allowed in the scanning room.

Children are not allowed in the waiting area unattended. Our staff are not permitted to supervise children, so please ensure child care arrangements are in place to avoid your tests being rescheduled.

The day of the procedure

A member of the nuclear medicine team will collect you from the waiting area and bring you into our preparation room, where they will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you may have.

You will then be given an injection, where a small amount of radioactivity will be injected into a vein in your arm or hand. This is similar to having a blood test. The injection does not have any known side effects and does not make you feel drowsy.

This injection will make your thyroid show up on the scan. It will take up to 20 minutes for this to happen.

The procedure

You do not usually have to get changed/undressed, but you will be asked to empty your pockets and remove any metal objects like mobile phones, jewellery, keys, coins, belts and braces before your scan. On some occasions you may be asked to change into a hospital gown.

These items can then be kept in the scanning room with you.

You will be asked to drink a cup of water before you lay on our scanning table. This is to ensure clear pictures of your thyroid gland are obtained.

The images are taken by a special machine called a gamma camera. This part of the examination may take up to 30 minutes. It is very important that you keep still.

A marker is placed on your neck to help localise your thyroid gland on the scan.

The camera is not a tunnel, but it will be positioned close to you, however there are sensors to prevent it from touching you.

Please tell the radiographer if you think you will find this difficult for any reason.

Staff will be at a short distance where they can see and hear you at all times.

After the procedure

You can eat, drink as normal and go where you wish.

You can also resume taking all your normal medication (which we may have stopped for this scan).

Please avoid close contact with children and pregnant women for the rest of the day. Close contact means having a child sit next to you for more than half an hour. This is to avoid exposing children to unnecessary radiation.

Please continue drinking more than usual to help clear the radiation from your body.

Can I drive after my procedure?

You are able to drive as soon as you are discharged from the department.

How soon can I return to work?

It is advisable to return to work the following day after your scan. However, if you wish to discuss this further, please contact the department using the telephone number at the end of this leaflet.

When will I get my results?

You will not know the results of your examination immediately. The radiologist will report their findings to the clinician who arranged your procedure, who will discuss the results with you. It usually takes a couple of weeks for the results to become available.

Contacting the team

If you have any further questions, please contact the nuclear medicine team on;

01279 827120, from Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm.

There is an answerphone available outside of these hours. Please leave a message and a member of the team will contact you.

Your feedback matters

If you would like to give feedback on your care, please contact our patient experience team at paht.pals@nhs.net or **01279 827211**.

Please contact the communications team at paht.communications@nhs.net if you would like this leaflet in another language or format.