

Patient information leaflet

Sentinel lymph node injection / scan

Radiology department

Introduction

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

What is a sentinel lymph node scan?

This is a test in which a small amount of radioactivity is used to obtain pictures of your sentinel lymph node of the affected breast.

Why do I need a sentinel lymph node 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 (a radioactive solution often known as radiotracer or radioactive isotope) 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 READ CAREFULLY *

If you are attending Nuclear Medicine the day before your operation date you can eat and drink normally.

If you are attending Nuclear Medicine on the day of your operation please make sure you follow the instructions given by the Breast Care team.

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 by phone.

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

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.

The procedure

Injection only

You will then be asked to change into a hospital gown and will be taken into the scanning room to lie down on the scanning table.

You will have an injection just under the skin by your nipple of the affected breast and it can feel similar to a bee sting.

After your injection a plaster will be applied and you are free to get dressed and leave the department.

Injection and scan (If applicable)

You will then be asked to change into a hospital gown and will be taken into the scanning room to lie down on the scanning table.

You will have an injection just under the skin by your nipple of the affected breast and it can feel similar to a bee sting.

After your injection a plaster will be applied and the scan will start immediately and images of the Lymphatic system to the sentinel lymph node will be obtained.

This type of test will take approximately 45 minutes.

In some instances, delayed images are necessary where we have to scan you again later. We can only tell you on the day if this is required.

After the Nuclear Medicine procedure

If you are attending **the day before** your operation date, you are free to leave the department once the injection has been done.

If you are attending **on the day** of your operation you will be advised to return to your ward ready for your surgery.

Can I drive after my procedure?

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

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How soon can I return to work?

As a department we would advise following guidance from your Breast Care team.

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.