Mater Private Network

Patient Information Leaflet

Thyroid Uptake Scan (Tc-99m)

Introduction

A thyroid uptake scan is a nuclear medicine exam done to assess the function of your thyroid gland.

Preparation

Inform us if you are on any thyroid medication as this may need to be stopped for the scan.
Inform us if you have had any scans involving iodine contrast in the 6 weeks prior to the scan Avoid food containing high levels of iodine the day before the scan (e.g. shellfish)
The injection will not impair your ability to drive a vehicle.
Pregnant women or children should not attend the appointment with you.
Ensure that you are well hydrated.

Women of childbearing age

This scan should be scheduled within 28 days of the commencement of your last menstrual period to avoid inadvertent irradiation of a foetus. If your period is overdue, your appointment may be rearranged.

Scan

On arrival you will be given the isotope injection into a vein in your arm. This injection should have no side effects. You will be asked to drink a glass of water to clear your salivary glands. 20 minutes after the injection, you will be asked to lie on the scanner table.

The scanner will be positioned over your neck. The scan will take approximately 10 minutes.

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Radiation precautions after the scan

Some of the isotope will remain in your body for approximately 24 hours after your scan is complete. To minimise the radiation dose to yourself and others, you should take the following precautions during this period:

1. Drink plenty of fluids and empty your bladder as frequently as possible. When using the toilet you should avoid spills, flush the toilet twice and wash your hands thoroughly. You should sit on the toilet when passing urine.

2. If possible, avoid close contact with pregnant women, infants and children for 24 hours after your injection.

3. If you are a nursing mother express and discard breast milk for 24 hours after your injection. You may resume normal breast-feeding after this time.

4. You should postpone any other medical tests or procedures for 24 hours after the injection where possible.

Medical radiation: risks v benefits

We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day. Medical exposures give a small additional dose on top of natural radiation.

The amount of radiation received during a nuclear medicine procedure is low, resulting in the equivalent of approximately a few months to two year's background radiation.

The only effect on the patient that is known to be possible at these low doses is a very slight increase in the chance of cancer occurring many years or decades after the exposure.

As long as it is clearly necessary to help make the correct diagnosis and treatment decision, the benefits of detection, diagnosis and treatment resulting from the nuclear medicine examination should outweigh these small radiation risks.