

Gastric Emptying Scan (Tc-99m)

Introduction

A gastric emptying scan is a nuclear medicine exam done to determine the time it takes for a meal to move from your stomach into your small intestine.

Preparation

You must fast from all liquids and food from midnight prior to the scan.

Inform us of any medications you are taking as some may need to be stopped for the scan.

Laxatives should not be taken on the evening before or morning of the scan.

If you are diabetic and require insulin, please bring insulin with you.

The injection will not impair your ability to drive a vehicle.

Pregnant women or children should not attend the appointment with you.

A medical physicist will contact you prior to the scan to explain the preparation and outline of the scan.

Women of childbearing age

This scan should be scheduled within 10 days of the commencement of your last menstrual period. If your period is overdue, your appointment may be rearranged.

Scan

On arrival you will be given a radioactive meal to consume. The medical physicist will explain to you in advance the content of the meal.

Following the meal, you will be asked to sit on a stool with a camera in front of you and a camera behind you. A 1 minute scan will be taken. This scan will be repeated every 30 minutes for at least 2 hours. Further scans may be required depending on how much of the meal is remaining in your stomach.

A medical physicist will process your scans and will inform you if further scans are required.

Patient Information Leaflet

You may wish to bring a book/magazine with you as you will be required to stay in the department for the duration of the exam.

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 you may need to express and discard breast milk for a number of hours following the test. Please contact us for further advice.
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.

Patient Information Leaflet

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.