

Biliary (HIDA) scan

This fact sheet tells you what a biliary (HIDA) scan is, and what is involved. Please read this sheet before you have your scan. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

What is a biliary scan?

A biliary scan is a nuclear medicine test. It uses a small amount of a radiopharmaceutical (radioactive tracer) to check your liver, gallbladder and the bile ducts – the parts of the biliary system.

A biliary scan is also known as a HIDA scan. HIDA stands for hepatobiliary iminodiacetic acid.

What is involved?

You will be given full instructions on how to prepare for your scan, including information about fasting and whether you need to stop taking any of your medicines before the test.

Before having the scan, you should tell your doctor and the imaging staff if you are breastfeeding, are pregnant or think you might be pregnant.

For the scan, you will be given a small injection of a radiopharmaceutical – usually through a small, thin needle in your arm. A special camera (called a gamma camera) will be used to track the radiopharmaceutical to take clear images of the area.

You will receive two scans for this procedure. For the first one, you will be lying down for about an hour while the camera takes pictures. Then you will be asked to wait for 45 minutes (as your gall bladder continues to fill) and drink Ensure Plus, which is a high-calorie nutritional drink. You may also be given an injection of morphine – this can help make your gallbladder easier to see.

Then you will lie down again to receive the second scan, which takes about 30 minutes.

What happens after the scan?

A nuclear medicine physician (a specialist doctor) will assess the pictures then send the results to your referring doctor. You should not have any problems after your test.

Are there any risks?

While all nuclear medicine tests involve some exposure to radiation, the amount is very small, so the risk of side effects is very low. Allergic reactions are very rare and almost always mild.

For more information

Nuclear medicine: Answering your questions by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation: www.ansto.gov.au/cs/groups/corporate/documents/webcontent/mdaw/mdax/~edisp/acstest_038604.pdf

RadiologyInfo by the American College of Radiology and Radiological Society of North America: www.radiologyinfo.org

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency: www.arpsa.gov.au

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