

PET scan

This fact sheet is designed to inform you what a PET scan is and what is involved. Please read it before your procedure. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

What is a PET scan?

PET stands for positron emission tomography. It is a nuclear medicine test where a small amount of a radiopharmaceutical (radioactive tracer) is injected into your body, where it gives off energy in the form of gamma rays. These gamma rays are picked up by a scanner, and a computer turns them into detailed images to show how tissue and organs are working.

PET scans are used to diagnose many types of cancers, heart disease and other conditions. They are also used to monitor you and see if your disease is getting better.

Procedure

You will be given instructions on how to prepare for your scan. You might need to stop eating or stop taking certain medications before the scan.

You should tell your doctor and the imaging staff if you have any allergies, are pregnant, think you may be pregnant or are breastfeeding.

Please allow one and a half to two and a half hours for this scan. There will be waiting periods after your injection before the images are taken.

After the procedure

A nuclear medicine physician (a specialist doctor) will look at the images and will send the results to your treating doctor. You should not have any issues after the scan.

Risks involved

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

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

PET scan, Better Health Channel, by the Victorian Government: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/pet-scan

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

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