

Lung scan

This fact sheet tells you what a lung scan, also known as a ventilation perfusion (VQ) lung scan, is and what is involved. Please read this sheet before having your lung scan. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

What is a lung scan?

A lung scan is a nuclear medicine scan. It takes images to look at the airways and blood supply of your lungs.

A lung scan is mostly used to find or rule out a blood clot, called a pulmonary embolism, in the lungs. A pulmonary embolism can cause death if not treated.

What is involved?

You need no special preparation to have a lung scan, but you will be asked to bring any recent chest X-rays or CT scans to the Nuclear Medicine department at the time of the test.

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

To have the lung scan, you will have to breathe in a very small amount of radioactive gas and be injected with a small amount of a radiopharmaceutical (radioactive tracer) into a vein in your arm. This is so that your airways and blood flow can be clearly seen on a special camera that takes the pictures.

A lung scan takes less than an hour.

What happens after the scan?

The nuclear medicine physician (a specialist doctor) will assess your images and will send the results to your referring doctor.

You will be asked to wait while the scans are checked. You should not have any issues 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.

Even for pregnant women, the risks to both mother and baby are much smaller than the risks of an undiagnosed pulmonary embolism.

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

InsideRadiology by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists: www.insideradiology.com.au

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

For more information, please contact:

LHD:

Name:

Phone:

Email: