



Royal Cornwall Hospitals
NHS Trust

Parathyroid scan



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Who is this leaflet for?

Your doctor would like you to have a nuclear medicine parathyroid scan and has arranged for you to visit our department. This leaflet aims to answer any questions you may have, but please don't hesitate to contact us if you need any more information.

What is a parathyroid scan?

This is a sensitive test which examines the function of your parathyroid glands. It is used to show any overactive parathyroid glands in your neck.

Are there any alternatives?

Ultrasound may be used, but you may need this test as well your parathyroid scan.

Do I need to prepare for it?

No, but we advise you to wear loose and comfortable clothing, preferably with no metal buttons, necklaces around the neck or buckles. Eat and drink normally and keep taking any prescribed medication.

What will happen?

Please arrive at the time stated on your appointment letter. Shortly after you arrive a small amount of a radioactive tracer will be injected into a vein your arm. It is very unlikely that you will have any side effects from this.

With any injection, there is a small risk that some of the tracer may leak around the injection site.

The risk associated with this is very small (eg. reddening or darkening of skin) and we will advise on any follow up in the unlikely event that this should affect you.

We need to perform the scan around 50 minutes after the injection. We will discuss the scan time with you. You will be able to leave the department in the intervening time.

How is the scan performed?

You will be asked to lie on the camera couch for the scan. The camera apparatus rotates once very slowly around your head and shoulders. The whole scan takes around 30 minutes. The camera is fairly quiet and most people find this perfectly tolerable. However, please feel free to discuss this with us if you are particularly claustrophobic.

Is it suitable for everyone?

If there is a chance that you may be pregnant or are breast-feeding, please contact us before your appointment date. Those patients aged between 12 and 56 years may be asked their pregnancy status.

If you have any mobility problems, or if you suffer from urinary incontinence, please inform us before you attend your appointment so that we can make suitable arrangements to help you.

Are there any risks?

We will ensure that the amount of radiation you receive is as small as possible.

It is similar to the natural radiation you would receive from living in Cornwall for just over a year.

Before you are given an appointment, our consultant will consider your clinical details and the test will only be performed if the benefits to you are much greater than the risks.

Radioactivity is eliminated from your body very quickly and allergic reactions are very rare.

Should I take any precautions?

Yes. Please avoid non-essential contact with children or anyone pregnant for the rest of the day.

Can I bring someone with me?

Yes, but please do not bring anyone pregnant or children unless they are the patient.

If a family member or friend usually helps you (the patient) with any personal care, please be aware that they may receive a very small exposure to radiation in the 24 hours after your scan. This radiation exposure is usually no greater than the natural, background radiation that would be received from spending a couple of weeks in Cornwall. The person who helps you will need to be informed of this exposure and agree to help you around the time of your examination. Please call nuclear medicine on 01872 252230 to discuss this with our staff.

When will I get my results?

We are unable to give you the results of your scan on the day you attend. We will send a report to your referring doctor, who will contact you.

Where can I park?

Parking is in the pay on foot car parks. There are 'dropping off' points, display car parks and parking for the disabled near the main entrances. Please allow plenty of time when coming for your appointment.

Where is the Nuclear Medicine department?

We are located in the basement of the Tower Block. On reaching the basement follow the signs to Nuclear Medicine, which is at the end of the corridor past Medical Physics.

Contact us

If you have any queries or need any further information, please contact the Nuclear Medicine department on 01872 252290.

If for any reason you cannot attend, please inform the department so that another patient can have your appointment.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

