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You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

If you are unhappy with the advice you have been given by your GP, consultant, or another healthcare professional, you may ask for a second (or further) opinion.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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Having a Nuclear Medicine Scan: Your guide to the procedure

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Your doctor has asked us to arrange a Nuclear Medicine test for you. We hope this leaflet will answer some of the questions that you may wish to ask.

What is Nuclear Medicine?

Nuclear Medicine is a technique that allows doctors to assess the function of different parts of the body. The images produced will help your doctor understand and treat your condition.

What is involved?

A small amount of radioactive tracer is injected into a vein in your arm or hand. The injection procedure is similar to that experienced in the Pathology Department when you attend for a blood test.

Following this injection functional images of your body will be taken using a piece of medical equipment called a Gamma Camera.

Usually you will need to wait before any images can be taken, although sometimes images can be taken immediately. The amount of time you need to wait between the injection and the scan varies according to the nature of the test. This can be between 15 minutes and 3 hours and should be confirmed by the appointment letter or by asking the radiographer undertaking your scan.

The images, which are taken with you lying down, will take up to 1 hour to acquire. You will not usually have to change for the examination however certain items of jewellery may need to be removed.

Are there any side effects?

No. The tracer we inject will not produce any side effects. Importantly it will not make you drowsy and so you will be able to drive home.

What preparation will I need for the scan?

For most Nuclear Medicine scans there is no special preparation.

Therefore unless otherwise stated on your appointment letter you can eat and drink normally on the day of your scan.

Importantly between the injection and the scan you will be encouraged to drink plenty of fluid to help improve the quality of the images.

Usually there will be no need for you to change your drug/tablet treatment and so unless stated on your appointment letter you can take your medication as normal. Patients attending for cardiac scans will receive further information on stopping certain medication.

Is the radiation dangerous?

With modern equipment and techniques the radiation dose to you is minimal. It is very similar to that received from other x-ray procedures. Importantly the benefits from the scan far outweigh any potential risk from the radiation.

Who will I see within the department?

A radiographer or reception clerk will greet you at the reception desk. Present within the scanning room will be the radiographers who will undertake your test.

Can somebody come with me?

Yes, however due to the radioactive nature of the investigation we advise that you should not be accompanied by anybody who is pregnant or by young children.

Do I need to do anything after the scan?

You can eat, drink and go where you wish after the scan. Being asked to drink more than usual for the rest of the day simply helps wash the radioactivity out of the body.

You should avoid close, prolonged contact with young children and pregnant women for the rest of the day. This is a sensible precaution to avoid exposing them to unnecessary radiation.

Will I be told the results straight away?

No. Although the images taken during the procedure are checked before you leave the department, the radiologist will need to study them closely before making any comment.

How will I get the results?

Once reported, a copy of the results will be forwarded to the doctor who requested the examination and a follow-up appointment will be arranged. If however, you do not hear within a fortnight you should contact the doctors secretary.

Is there anything I should tell you before the scan?

Yes, please contact us before your appointment if you are pregnant, or think that you may be pregnant. Also, please tell us if you are breast-feeding.

Any further questions

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask us at any time before, during or after your scan.

Please note

Ask your General Practitioner to arrange for an ambulance or hospital car to bring you to your appointment if necessary.

Clinical Radiology

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