

What is a PET Scan?

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

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A PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scan is a diagnostic test that provides your doctor with information regarding metabolic activity in your body.

How is the PET scan performed?

Prior to the scan, you will be given an injection of a small amount of radioactive tracer. This tracer can be detected by the PET scanner after it distributes throughout your body, potentially providing useful information for your doctor.

After the injection, you will lie quietly in a darkened room for 45 - 60 minutes while the material distributes throughout your body. You will then be asked to lie on an examination table that will slide slowly through the PET scanner. You will need to remain still and in one position on the table during the scanning period, which takes 30 - 45 minutes.

How should I prepare for the PET scan?

- Be on time for your appointment, because the tracer material is pre-measured precisely for the time of your test.
- Do not eat for at least 6 hours before your appointment.
- You may drink water as desired.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing to the test.
- You may take your usual medications the morning of the test.
- Do not do any exercise or heavy physical labor 24 hours before your appointment.
- If you have diabetes, speak with your doctor about specific instructions regarding food and medications for the test day.
- Discuss with your doctor if you are claustrophobic or worried about lying still during the scan; he may order medication to help you relax during the procedure.
- If there is any chance that you may be pregnant, speak with your doctor before scheduling the procedure.

Is there a danger from the radioactive material used?

Only a small amount of radioactive material is used to perform the scan and it is short-lived so exposure to radiation is limited.

For female patients, if there is any possibility you may be pregnant or if you are breast feeding, it is important to tell this to the technologist before the scan.

Speak with the technologist if you have questions or concerns regarding your PET scan. A formal report will be sent to your doctor within days after the examination. Your doctor will speak with you regarding the results.

Are there any special follow-up instructions after the PET scan?

- Usually there are no restrictions on activity following a PET scan.
- Drink plenty of fluids to help flush out any remaining tracer from the test.
- If you have taken a sedative for the procedure you must have a family member or friend available to drive you home.

References: Greenwich Hospital Radiology Department
Boca Radiology Group. Retrieved 12/04 from www.bocaradiology.com
RadiologyInfo. Retrieved 12/04 from www.radiologyinfo.org

For more Patient Education Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenhosp.org and click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education