

Patient information factsheet

Having a liver HIDA scan

We have given you this factsheet because you have been referred for a liver HIDA (hepatobiliary iminodiacetic acid) scan. It explains what a liver HIDA scan is and what will happen at your appointment so that you know what to expect. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is a liver HIDA scan?

A liver HIDA scan is a type of nuclear medicine scan. It uses a small amount of radioactive tracer (a substance that helps show how parts of the body are working) to check how well your liver, gallbladder and bile ducts (small tubes that carry bile from your liver and gallbladder to your bowel) are functioning.

Why do I need to have this scan?

A liver HIDA scan will allow us to:

- assess your liver and gallbladder function (including any issues with your gallbladder not emptying properly (biliary dyskinesia))
- detect abnormalities, such as gallbladder inflammation (cholecystitis), bile duct obstruction (a blockage in your bile ducts), or bile leaks
- identify possible causes of upper abdominal pain

How should I prepare for the scan?

Your appointment letter will tell you the date and time of your scan. Please let us know as soon as possible if you cannot attend so we can arrange another appointment for you.

Medications

You will need to **stop** taking the following medications **48 hours** before your scan:

- opioid pain relief medicines (including any containing codeine)
- calcium channel blockers (medicines used to treat high blood pressure)
- nitrates (medicines used to treat or prevent chest pain)

If you are unsure which medications you need to stop taking before your scan, please contact us for advice.

Eating and drinking

You should eat and drink as normal until four hours before your scan. You should then **not** eat or drink anything in **the four hours** before your scan.

You may wish to bring something to eat and drink after your scan.

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If you have diabetes

If you have diabetes, please contact us for advice.

Clothing and jewellery

You will not have to get undressed for this scan. Please wear comfortable clothing and remove any metal objects, such as trouser braces or jewellery.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

Contact us for advice as soon as you receive your appointment letter if you:

- are pregnant
- think you may be pregnant
- are breastfeeding

We may postpone your scan if it is not urgent.

Bringing someone with you for support

Please do **not** bring anyone with you to your appointment, unless you need additional physical or emotional support.

If you need someone to come with you to your appointment, they must:

- be over 18 years of age
- not be pregnant

When you arrive for your appointment, we will ask them to read a factsheet and complete a carer and comforter's form.

How long will the appointment take?

You should allow up to four and a half hours for your whole appointment, as you will need to have two or possibly three scans during this time.

What will happen before the scan?

When you arrive for your appointment, we will explain the scan in more detail and answer any questions you may have. We will then ask you if you are happy to go ahead with the scan.

We will insert a small needle or cannula (a thin plastic tube) into a vein in your arm or hand. We will then give you an injection containing a small amount of radioactive tracer. The injection should not cause any side effects. We will start the scan immediately after the injection.

What will happen during the scan?

The scan will be performed by a nuclear medicine technologist or radiographer (a person specially trained in taking images of the inside of the body) using a gamma camera (a camera that detects the radiation from the radioactive tracer inside your body).

For the scan, we will ask you to lie flat on your back on the imaging couch in the room. We will try to make you as comfortable as possible with the use of pads and supports. The gamma camera will come close to you, but it is not a tunnel and will not make any loud noises. You will need to lie as still as possible during the scan to help us get clear images.

The **first scan** will take **one hour**.

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We will then ask you to drink a nutritional shake containing a small amount of fat. This is needed to stimulate your gallbladder. The shake contains milk and soy. It is suitable for vegetarian, kosher and halal diets. It is also clinically lactose-free and gluten-free.

We will then take a **second scan** for a further **hour**.

If needed, we will take a **third scan** one hour later, which will take **five minutes**.

Are there any risks?

During your scan, radioactivity (gamma rays) will be used to see inside your body. This is a type of ionising radiation which increases your risk of cancer, but for this type of scan, the risk is low. The scan cannot be done without radiation. Your doctor has decided that the benefit to you from the scan outweighs the low risk from the radiation. You will not be exposed to any more radiation than is absolutely necessary.

What will happen after the scan?

You will be able to go home immediately after the scan.

For a short while after your scan, there will be some radioactive tracer left in your body. During this time, you will need to avoid close contact with children and those who are pregnant, as they are more sensitive to radiation. We will give you specific restrictions to follow for up to 10 hours after your injection.

If your work involves using radioactivity, you may not be able to return to work immediately. Contact us for advice.

The radioactive tracer in your body will soon disappear. Drink plenty of fluids to help clear the radioactive tracer from your body faster.

When will I receive the results?

A specialist doctor will review your scan and send a report to the doctor who referred you for the scan. The doctor who referred you will then contact you to discuss your results.

Radiation protection information

Please read the information below carefully.

Radioactive urine

Your urine will be radioactive for **24 hours** from the time we give you the radioactive tracer. During this time, you should:

- sit down on the toilet
- flush the toilet twice

While you are in hospital, please use the toilets in the nuclear medicine department if possible.

Urinary incontinence (loss of bladder control)

If you suffer from urinary incontinence, please contact us for advice. If you use incontinence pads, please bring spare pads with you.

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Travelling after the scan

It is safe for you to travel after your scan. Many airports and seaports have radiation detectors so if you plan to travel in the three days after your scan, take your appointment letter with you to explain that you have had a nuclear medicine scan.

Further information

If you are arriving by car, please allow plenty of time to find a space to park. You may wish to consider getting a lift or coming by public transport.

Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us.

Nuclear medicine department

Telephone: **023 8120 6627** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4.30pm)

If you are unsure why you need to have this scan, please speak to the doctor who referred you for the scan.

Useful links

www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/radiology-scans-and-imaging/what-we-do/nuclear-medicine

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

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