

Patient information factsheet

Hepatobiliary colloid (liver) scan

We have given you this factsheet because you have been referred for a hepatobiliary colloid (liver) scan. It explains what a hepatobiliary colloid (liver) 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 hepatobiliary colloid (liver) scan?

A hepatobiliary colloid (liver) scan, also known as a liver and spleen 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 and spleen are functioning.

Why do I need to have this scan?

A hepatobiliary colloid (liver) scan will allow us to:

- assess your liver and spleen function
- detect abnormalities such as cirrhosis (liver damage)
- identify splenic tissue (spleen cells in unusual places)

Preparing 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

- Continue to take your usual medications as normal.

Eating and drinking

- Do **not** eat or drink anything for **five** hours before your scan.
- You may wish to bring something to eat and drink after your scan.

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 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.

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Bringing someone with you for support

Please do **not** bring anyone with you to your scan, unless you need additional support (physical or emotional). If someone does come with you, they must be over the age of 18 years and they must not be pregnant. We will ask them to read a factsheet and complete a carer and comforters form.

For more information, please read our 'Caring for or comforting a relative or friend during a nuclear medicine diagnostic procedure' factsheet (see the useful links section at the end of this factsheet).

Before the scan

When you arrive for your appointment, we will explain the scan in more detail and answer any questions you may have. If you are happy to proceed, we will then ask for your verbal consent.

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. After we have given you the injection, we will ask you to wait 20 minutes for the radioactive tracer to collect in your liver and spleen.

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 special 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 loud noises.

You will need to lie as still as possible during the scan to help us get clear images.

The scan usually takes about 30 minutes, but please allow up to two hours for your whole appointment.

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 very low. The scan cannot be done without radiation. Your doctor has decided that the benefit to you from the scan outweighs the very low risk from the radiation. You will not be exposed to any more radiation than is absolutely necessary.

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.

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After the scan

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

Your 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.

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, 8am to 5.30pm)

If you are unsure why you need to have the 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

www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Scansandx-rays/Caring-for-or-comforting-a-relative-or-friend-during-a-nuclear-medicine-diagnostic-procedure-3600-PIL.pdf

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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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