



What You Need to Know Before Having a PET-CT Scan

What is a PET- CT Scan?

A PET - CT scan is a type of medical imaging that combines 2 tests - a Positron Emission Tomography (PET) and a Computed Tomography (CT). During a PET - CT scan, you receive an injection of a radioactive material called a tracer. This injection is given through an intravenous line (IV) put into one of your veins. The tracer collects in an area of your body, where it gives off a small amount of energy. The PET – CT scanner finds this energy and makes a picture of your body’s organs and tissues, showing areas where the tracer ‘lights up’ during the scan.

A PET - CT scan is used to help:

- Diagnose disease.
- Plan for treatment.
- Find out how well treatment is working.

You need to be at the hospital for about 3 hours to have the scan completed.

Are there any risks in having this scan?

The amount of radiation exposure from a PET-CT scan is considered a safe amount. It is not recommended you have this scan if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Talk to the doctor who ordered the PET-CT scan about this if you are pregnant (might be pregnant) or breastfeeding. You may need to have a pregnancy test before you have the scan.

If you are claustrophobic (experience fear or anxiety in tight or closed spaces)

Ask the doctor to prescribe you a medication to help you relax. If you take a medication to help you relax, you need to have an adult drive you home after the scan.

How to prepare for your scan

It is important you follow all the instructions listed below to make sure the scan can be done. It is possible the scan would need to be rescheduled if you are not prepared to have it. Following these instructions also helps the best possible pictures to be taken during the scan.

For the 48 hours before your scan

Do not exercise. This includes walking long distances.

For the 24 hours before your scan

- Eat foods high in protein such as beef, pork, lamb, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, cheese, cottage cheese.

- Eat foods low in carbohydrates such as broccoli, asparagus, cauliflower, zucchini, spinach, mushrooms. Do not eat breads, pastas, rice, pastries, fruits and juices, and potatoes.
- Do not eat foods with added sugars or artificial sweeteners.

6 hours before your scan

Do not eat any food. Do not chew gum or have any candy. You can drink unflavoured water. Take your regularly scheduled medications with unflavored water.

2 hours before your scan

Drink 500 milliliters (2 cups) of unflavored water during the 2 hours before your scan.

1 hour before your scan

Stay warm.

If you are a diabetic

- Your blood sugar level should be below 11 mmol/L. Call us at 905-576-8711 extension 35472 if you are not able to do this.
- If you take pills or tablets to manage your diabetes: Take these pill or tablets early in the morning with a sip of water (no flavoring).
- If you take insulin to manage your diabetes: Do not take your insulin in the morning on the day of your scan. If you have a continuous insulin pump, turn it off for 4 hours before the scan.
- Manage a low blood sugar as you would normally. Call us at 905-576-8711 extension 35472 if you experience low blood sugar.

When you come to the hospital for your scan

- Wear warm, comfortable clothing without metal or zippers. Do not wear any jewelry.
- Do not bring children or anyone who is pregnant with you.
- Check in at the reception desk of the Diagnostic Imaging department. The Diagnostic Imaging department is located in the G-wing on the main floor of the hospital.
- You will be given directions to the Nuclear Medicine department. This is where you will have your PET - CT scan.
- A technologist will explain how the scan is done.
- You will be weighed and have your blood sugar tested (finger-prick).
- An intravenous catheter (IV) will be inserted into your arm. The IV is used to give you the tracer. It takes about 45 to 60 minutes for the tracer to travel through your body. You will stay in a quiet room during this time. Your family member/partner-in-care cannot stay with you.

During the scan

- You will lie on a table that slides into the PET-CT scanner (a large machine with a round, doughnut-shaped opening).
- The scan itself is painless and takes about 30 minutes.
- A technologist will monitor you during the scan.
- Do not move during the scan as this may impact the quality of the pictures taken during the scan.

After the scan

- Drink extra fluids to help flush the radiotracer out of your body.
- Resume your normal activities and diet immediately after the scan.
- For 1 hour after your scan: Do not have close contact with a person who is pregnant or anyone under the age of 18.

The doctor who ordered the scan will have your results in about 2 to 3 days. Make sure you have an appointment to review the results with your doctor.

Call the Nuclear Medicine Department at 905-576-8711 extension 35472 if you have any questions about the information in this handout.