



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Nuclear Medicine Lung (VQ) Scan

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Radiology Department

① For more information, please contact:

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About this leaflet

In this leaflet, we tell you about the procedure known as a nuclear medicine lung scan. This is also referred to as a VQ scan. We explain what is involved and what the possible risks are. The information in this leaflet is not meant to replace informed discussion between you and your doctor but can act as a starting point for such a discussion.

What is a lung scan?

This is a nuclear medicine diagnostic imaging test that uses a radioactive tracer to take images of your lungs. It is used to diagnose or rule out a pulmonary embolism (PE).

Are there any alternatives?

The alternative to a lung scan is a CTPA scan. The advantage of a CTPA scan is that it can diagnose other lung conditions, which may be causing your symptoms, whereas a lung scan can only diagnose PE.

The advantage of a lung scan is that it gives a slightly smaller radiation dose to the breasts. If you have any concerns, please discuss them with the doctor who referred you to us.

What preparation is needed before the lung scan?

There is no special preparation for the scan so you can eat and drink normally. If you have not had a recent chest x-ray, we may send you for one before you have your lung scan.

You will not be asked to remove your clothes for the scan, but it is a good idea to wear clothing that doesn't have a lot of metal on it. Small buttons and zips are fine.

What happens during the lung scan?

When we take you in to the scanning room, we will explain what the lung scan involves, and you will have the opportunity to ask questions.

We will ask you to lie on a bed on your back and the bed moves you into the gamma camera. The lung scan is in two parts. The first part looks at your breathing and the airflow into your lungs. To look at the airflow we need you to breathe in some slightly radioactive gas through a mouthpiece. The gas sticks in your lungs so that we can take images of the air distribution. The gas does not taste of anything, and it will not make you feel any different. Once the gas is in your lungs, we take three pictures at different angles around your chest. You can relax and breathe normally while the scan is in progress.

The second part of the scan looks at the blood supply to your lungs. You will be given a small injection, usually into a vein in your arm. The injection contains a small amount of a radioactive tracer, which shows the blood flow to your lungs. Again, the injection should not make you feel any different. Side effects are very rare. Once the injection has been given, we repeat the three pictures using the gamma camera.

The whole test takes about 30 minutes.

What happens after the lung scan?

After your scan, you will be free to leave the nuclear medicine department. If you have come from the maternity triage unit, you will usually go back there to wait for the results. If you are an outpatient, you can go home.

We recommend that you drink plenty of fluids for the rest of the day to help flush any remaining radioactivity out of your body.

Are there any risks or complications?

Nuclear medicine procedures are among very safe diagnostic imaging tests. Side effects from the radioactive tracers are extremely rare.

The amount of radioactivity involved is small, and after 24 hours most of the radioactive tracer will have passed out of your body. There is radiation in the air and ground all around us called background radiation. Most radioisotope scans give you on average the equivalent of a year's background radiation or less.

This scan can be carried out on pregnant women as an alternative to a CTPA scan. If you are breastfeeding, you will be asked to stop for 14 hours after your scan. This is because some of the radioactive injection goes into breastmilk. You will be asked to express the milk and throw it away. Breastfeeding can continue as normal after 14 hours.

Results

If you have been referred from the maternity triage unit, they will usually ask you to return to them to wait for the results. If you have come as an outpatient, the results will go back to the doctor who referred you for the scan.

What if I have any other questions?

If you have any worries or questions about your scan, please feel free to telephone us on 01904 726696 and we will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Nuclear Medicine, Radiology, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 726696.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

如果你要求本資 不同的 或 式提供 , 電
或發電

Jeżeli niniejsze informacje potrzebne są w innym języku lub formacie, należy zadzwonić lub wysłać wiadomość e-mail

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