

UW Medicine



Scan this QR code with your phone camera for a digital copy of this handout.

Hepatobiliary Scan

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains what a hepatobiliary scan is, how it works, what to expect, and how to get your results.

What is a hepatobiliary scan?

A *hepatobiliary scan* checks for problems in the liver and gallbladder. It is a nuclear medicine exam that uses a radioactive *tracer* to detect and treat disease. It is a form of radiology, because radiation is used to take pictures. The full name of the scan is *hepatobiliary iminodiacetic acid scan*.

How does it work?

We will place a thin tube called an *intravenous* (IV) line into a vein in your arm. We will give you a small dose of tracer through this IV. The tracer collects in your liver and gallbladder and gives off *gamma rays*.

A *gamma camera* detects the rays and sends images to a computer. The computer creates pictures of your liver and gallbladder.



A gamma camera

How do I prepare?

- Tell your provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Tell your doctor if you cannot lie still for 3 to 4 hours. You must lie still while the camera takes pictures. Your doctor may prescribe a mild *sedative* (medicine to make you relax) for this scan. You may also be able to take short breaks each hour.
- Some oral pain medicines contain drugs that may affect the results of this test. See the chart on page 2 for the list of these medicines. The chart also shows how long you will need to pause taking the medicine.

- Talk with the provider who prescribed the medicine to make sure it is OK to skip doses for the time given.
- Tell the scheduler if your provider says that you cannot skip doses for the time required.
- Plan for a responsible adult who can take you home after the scan. This person may drive you, or ride with you on a bus or taxi. **You cannot drive yourself or take a bus or taxi by yourself.** This is because we may give you a small dose of morphine to help us take pictures of your gall bladder. Morphine can make you sleepy and affect your ability to think clearly.

How Long Before Your Scan to Stop Taking Oral Pain Medicines

Brand Names	Drug	Stop Taking It
Dilaudid, Exalgo, Hydromorph Contin	Hydromorphone hydrochloride	11 hours before your scan
Apokyn, Avinza, Embeda, Kadian, MS Contin, Oramorph SR, Roxanol	Morphine sulfate	16 hours before your scan
Combunox, Oxycet, OxyContin, OxyIR, Percocet, Percodan, Roxicet, Roxicodone, Roxilox, Tylox	Oxycodone	14 hours before your scan
Capital with Codeine, Fiorinal with Codeine, Tylenol with Codeine, all cough medicines with codeine	Codeine	12 hours before your scan
Anexsia, Co-gesic, Lortab, Norco, Reprexain, Vicodin, Vicoprofen, Zydone	Hydrocodone	15 hours before your scan
Dolophine, Methadose	Methadone	<i>If you have been taking it less than 3 days: Stop taking it 32 hours before your scan</i> <i>If you have been taking it 3 days or longer: Stop taking it 2 weeks before your scan</i>

Day Before Your Scan

The day before your scan, eat and drink as usual. Do **not** skip meals.

On Scan Day

- Starting 4 hours before the scan, do **not** eat or drink anything.
- Bring with you a list of all the medicines you currently take.
- Bring a responsible adult who can take you home after the scan.

If You Are of Childbearing Age

Before the tracer is injected:

- Tell the technologist if there is **any** chance you may be pregnant.
- We will ask if you are breastfeeding.
- We will again confirm that there is no chance you are pregnant.

What to Expect

- You will lie on your back on an exam table. The technologist will help make you comfortable.
- An *intravenous* (IV) line will be placed in your arm vein. You will be given a small dose of tracer through the IV.
- You must lie still while the camera hovers over your belly. If you move, the pictures will be blurry and may need to be taken again.
- Pictures are taken for at least 2 hours. Sometimes more pictures are taken 3 to 4 hours later.
- If your doctor wants to see how your gallbladder is working, you may receive an IV medicine that makes your gallbladder contract. Or, you may receive a small dose of morphine. More images will then be taken.

What will I feel during the scan?

- You may feel some minor discomfort from the IV.
- Lying still on the exam table may be hard for some people.

What happens to the radioactive tracer?

Drink plenty of water for 24 hours after your scan to help your body get rid of the tracer. Most of it will leave your body in your urine or stool. The rest will go away over time.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A nuclear medicine doctor will review your images, prepare a written report, and talk with your provider about the results. Your own provider will talk with you about the results of your scan.

You may also read your results on your MyChart page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

You and your provider will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- ☐ UWMC Nuclear Medicine/
Imaging Services:
206.598.6200
- ☐ Harborview Nuclear
Medicine: 206.744.4473
- ☐ UWMC - Northwest Imaging
Services: 206.598.4240
- ☐ Fred Hutch Cancer Center
PET Clinic: 206.606.7191
- ☐ Fred Hutch Cancer Center
Nuclear Medicine Clinic:
206.606.7045