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PET/CT FDG Body Scan

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains a PET/CT scan, how to prepare for it, how it works, what to expect during the scan, and how to get your results.

What is a PET/CT FDG body scan?

PET stands for *positron emission tomography*. CT stands for *computed tomography*. FDG stands for *2-Deoxy-2-[¹⁸F]fluoro-D-Glucose*.

This scan takes pictures of your body's cells in action. It allows a specially trained doctor (*radiologist*) to check for changes in your cells.

Before we start your scan, we will inject a *radioactive tracer* called *18 FDG*. Some cancer cells and inflamed cells use more energy than healthy cells. The tracer helps us see how much energy your cells are using.

Why are these scans done?

A PET/CT camera takes 2 types of pictures:

- The **PET scan** shows where the tracer has collected in your body.
- The **CT scan** shows your body structures.

Together, these scans help us see changes in your cells. These scans can help find cancer or tell us how cancer treatments are working.



Dark areas show where tracer

How do I prepare?

- Make sure that your appointment time works well for you. The exact timing of this study is very important.
- Tell your provider if you think you will need a *sedative* to help you relax for the scan. They can give you a prescription for this medicine. You must fill this prescription yourself and bring the medicine with you on scan day.

- Your provider may want you to have a CT scan with IV *contrast* (X-ray dye) to be done after your PET/CT scan. If so, ask your provider for a handout about this scan.
- *If you were assigned female at birth:* Tell your provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if there is any chance you could be pregnant.
- Please call staff where your scan is scheduled (see phone numbers in the “Questions” box on page 5) if you:
 - Have diabetes
 - Are taking Neupogen, Neulasta, or any other granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF) drugs
 - Are taking Epogen, Procrit, or any other drugs that stimulate red blood cells

Day Before Your Scan

- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.
- **Do NOT exercise** for 24 hours before your scan.

On Scan Day

- **You must fast for 6 hours before your scan.** Do **not** eat or drink anything except plain water during this time.
- **Your last meal before the 6-hour fast must be high in protein and NOT include any carbohydrates.** (See page 4.)
- You may take prescribed medicines (except cough syrup or chewable tablets) **IF** you can take them on an empty stomach. If we told you not to take your medicines, do not take them.
- **Starting 6 hours before your scan:**
 - Do **not** take any dextrose medicines by *total parenteral nutrition* (TPN) or *intravenous* (IV) line.
 - Do **not** chew gum, eat candy or mints, or take vitamins.

What to Bring

- If you are having sedation for the scan:
 - Remember to bring the sedative with you to the hospital.
 - You **must** bring a responsible adult with you who will take you home. **You cannot drive yourself or take a bus, Uber, or taxi by yourself.**

- If you can, bring your most recent imaging films or CDs. These include PET, CT, or MRI images. Our doctors will compare them to your new PET/CT images.
- Do **not** bring children or anyone who is pregnant with you, since we will use radioactive material for the scan.
- Wear warm, loose-fitting clothes since scanner rooms may be cold.
- Do **not** wear jewelry, piercings, or clothing with zippers, snaps, or other metal.

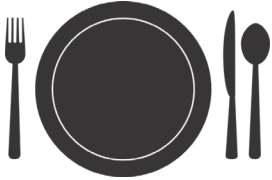
At the Hospital

- **Please arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time.**
- We will provide warm blankets for you during your scan.
- If you have disease in your pelvis, we may place a bladder *catheter* (a tube that drains urine from your bladder) before your PET/CT scan.

Food and Drink Before Your Scan

For this scan, you **must** follow the instructions on page 4 **EXACTLY**. If you do not, we will need to reschedule your scan.

Instructions



In the meal before
your 6-hour fast

- You **MUST** eat fats and proteins.
- Do **NOT** eat any carbohydrate foods.

Eat ONLY:

- Plain meat (beef, steak, pork, chicken, or lamb), fish, and eggs. You may cook the meat in oil, if you wish. **NO** bacon, deli meats, or other processed meats.
- **VEGANS:** Eat **ONLY** plain tofu that has been cooked in oil (added fat is needed).

“Plain” means NO sauces, seasonings, dressings, or breading.

Drink ONLY:

- Water

Medicines:

- **NO** chewable, liquid, or lollipop medicines. Take all other medicines with water.



Starting 6 HOURS
BEFORE your scan

- **FAST** – do **NOT** eat anything.
- You may drink water.
- Do **NOT** take any chewable, liquid, or lollipop medicines. Take all other medicines with water only.

If you have diabetes:

- Starting 6 hours before the study, do **NOT** take insulin or other diabetes medicines.



IMPORTANT!

You **MUST** eat **ONLY** proteins and fats in your last meal before your 6-hour fast.

What can I expect when I arrive?

A technologist or a nurse, or both, will help you get ready for your scan.

- We will insert an *intravenous* (IV) line (a thin tube used to give you medicine and fluids) into a vein.
 - We will check your blood sugar.
 - The technologist will inject the FDG tracer through your IV.
 - You will relax for about 45 minutes while the tracer flows through your body.
 - You will then be taken to the PET/CT scan area.
 - We will ask you to lie on your back on the scanner table, with your arms above your head.
 - The PET/CT camera will take images. Most scans cover the area from the base of your skull down to the middle of your thighs. This imaging takes about 15 minutes.
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- Expect to be in the Imaging Department for 2 to 2½ hours for your entire scan.

What will I feel during the scan?

- You may feel some discomfort when the IV line is placed.
- During the PET/CT scan, you must relax and not move.
- You will not feel anything from the tracer being in your body. The radioactivity is gone within a day.

What happens after the scan?

After the scan, drink plenty of fluids. This will help flush the remaining tracer out of your system.

Who reads the scan and how will I get the results?

A radiologist or nuclear medicine doctor will read your scan and also review past scans you may have brought with you. Your own provider will give you your scan results. Your provider should receive the results from the radiologist or nuclear medicine doctor within 3 days.

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

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

Questions?

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

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