

Thyroid Uptake and Scan

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains a thyroid uptake and scan. It tells how to prepare for the test, how it works, how it is done, what you may feel during the test, and how to get your results.

What is a thyroid uptake and scan?

A *thyroid uptake and scan* is a nuclear medicine exam. It checks how your thyroid gland looks and works. It is done over 2 days.

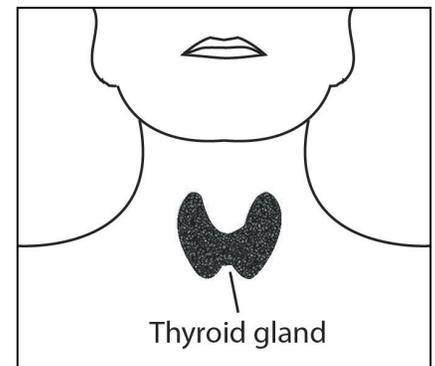
Both parts of the test are done in the Imaging Services department at UW Medical Center - Montlake.

How do the tests work?

- On the first day, you will have an uptake of radioactive *tracer* (X-ray dye) and a study.
- On the next day, you will have another tracer uptake and a scan.

Day 1: Uptake

On day 1, you will swallow a small dose of tracer. This tracer will collect in your thyroid gland and give off *gamma* and *beta rays*. A sensor will detect how much of the tracer your thyroid absorbed.



The tracer you swallow for the uptake will collect in your thyroid gland.

Day 2: Uptake and Scan

On day 2, we will inject a small amount of tracer into a vein, usually in your arm. We will then take images of your thyroid.

How do I prepare for the uptake and scan?

6 Weeks Before

You must **NOT** have had exams involving iodine contrast (such as IVP or CT) in the last 6 weeks. Talk with your provider if you have any questions.

4 Weeks Before

Most patients must stop taking thyroid hormone medicine (such as synthroid, cytomel, lerothyroxine, or lithyronine) 4 weeks before their uptake and scan. **Check with your provider BEFORE you stop taking this medicine.**

In the Week Before

- *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.
- Do **not** take any oral iodides (such as Lugol's solution or SSKI) for 5 days before your exam. Do **not** take them again until your uptake and scan exam is completed.
- Do **not** take vitamins that contain iodine for 5 days before your uptake and scan.
- Most people will stop taking anti-thyroid hormones (such as Propothyouracil (PTU), Methimazole, or Tapazole thyroid medicine) 4 days before their tests. **Be sure to check with your provider BEFORE you stop taking these medicines.**

Day of the Exam

- Do **not** eat for 2 hours before your exam. You may drink water.
- Bring 2 forms of identification (ID) with you.
- *If you were assigned female at birth:*
 - **Before** we begin the uptake and scan, tell us if you are breastfeeding, or if there is any chance you could be pregnant, even if you plan to end the pregnancy.
 - If you are under 60 years old, you will have a pregnancy test (blood test) on Day 1 of the exam, **before** the uptake dose. Plan to be at the hospital an extra 1½ hours to get the results of the pregnancy test.
 - You cannot keep breastfeeding after you receive the tracers.

How are the uptake and scan done?

Day 1

- When you arrive at Imaging Services, we will ask you to swallow a capsule that contains a tracer.

- For 2 more hours after swallowing this capsule, do **not** eat or drink anything besides water.
- After this 2-hour fasting period, you may eat before you return for your uptake study.
- You will return for an uptake study 3 to 4 hours after you swallow the tracer. This part of the visit will take 10 minutes.

Day 2

- You will return the next day for another uptake.
- After this second uptake, we will do a scan of your thyroid.
- For the thyroid scan, a tracer will be injected in your vein. You will then need to wait 10 to 15 minutes before imaging begins. The entire visit takes about 1 to 1½ hours.
- If you are going to be treated with a therapeutic dose of I-31 right after the uptake and scan:
 - Do **not** eat any solid foods for 2 hours before this appointment.
 - After the uptake and scan, it will take about 1 hour for your therapy dose to arrive. Treatment with I-131 will add 1 more hour to your appointment time.
 - Please review the radiation safety information. See “Treating Hyperthyroidism with Radioactive Iodine.”

What should I expect during and after the exam?

- It may be hard for some patients to lie still on the exam table.
- Most of the tracer quickly passes out of your body in your urine. The rest simply goes away over time.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A doctor with special training in nuclear medicine will review the images and send a report to your provider. Your own provider will then talk with you about the results.

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
- Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105