Whole Body Radioiodine Scan

Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn:

• what a whole body radioiodine scan is
• how to prepare
• what to expect
• who to call if you have any questions

For your whole body radioiodine scan:
You will receive your pill:
Date: __________________________
Time: __________________________

You will have your whole body scan:
Date: __________________________
Time: __________________________

Toronto General Hospital
585 University Avenue
Medical Imaging Reception
Peter Munk Building – 1st floor
What is whole body radioiodine scan?

A whole body radioiodine scan is a **nuclear medicine** test. The test finds out where any remaining thyroid tissue is in your body after radioactive iodine treatment.

How do nuclear medicine tests work?

Nuclear medicine tests are different from x-rays. X-rays show what your body looks like. Nuclear medicine tests show how your body and organs are working.

Before a nuclear medicine test, something called a **radiopharmaceutical** is put in your body. A radiopharmaceutical is radioactive. This means it gives off energy. To get the radiopharmaceutical in your body, you will:

- swallow it
- breathe it in
- or get an injection (a needle)

It will travel to the part of your body that your doctor wants to see. When it reaches the right area, we will take pictures of you. We will use a special machine called a **gamma camera**. It takes pictures of the energy coming from the radiopharmaceutical (also called radioactive tracer).

Nuclear medicine tests can help find problems that other tests can’t find.

How do I prepare for the test?

- **✓** Eat a light meal 1 and a half to 2 hours before your 1st appointment.
- **✓** Check in at the Medical Imaging reception area (University Avenue entrance, across from the pharmacy) **15 minutes before your appointments**.
- **✓** Remember to bring your health card (OHIP). If you do not have an OHIP card, please bring another form of government-issued photo ID (such as a driver’s license, passport, or other provincial health card).
If you haven’t registered, come to Toronto General Hospital 30 minutes before your appointment. Go to Patient Registration on the Ground floor near the Elizabeth Street entrance.

For women:
If there is any chance that you are pregnant, tell the technologist before they give you the radioactive tracer.

If you are between 10 and 55 years old, we may do a pregnancy test. The radioactive tracer can harm an unborn baby.

You will need to stop breastfeeding completely after this test. Tell the technologist if you are breastfeeding.

What can I expect?
1st appointment:
• We give you a pill to swallow which has radioactive iodine. After swallowing the pill, don’t have anything to eat for 1 hour. You can drink clear fluids like water or apple juice. Milk is not a clear liquid.
• After 1 hour, drink extra fluids and empty your bladder often.
• The radioiodine will come out through your urine, saliva and sweat over the next few days.

Follow these instructions for 24 hours after swallowing the pill:
✓ Every time after you use the toilet, flush it twice with the lid down and wash your hands well with soap and water.
✓ For men: Sit on the toilet to empty your bladder.
✓ Wash your hands often with lots of soap and warm water throughout the day.
✓ Suck on hard candies or lemon slices. This will help with your flow of saliva.
Don’t spend a lot of time near others, especially pregnant women and small children (the same as if you had a bad cold).

Separate your bath towels, face cloths, cutlery, and dishes from the ones your family use. Wash these items last.

These instructions will help keep you and others around you safe.

2nd appointment:

- This appointment is 2 days after your 1st appointment.
- You return to the nuclear medicine department for your whole body scan. You lie on a bed while the camera passes above and below you. This can take up to 1 hour.
- After the scan, your technologist will let you know if they need to take more pictures.

Are there any side effects?

You will not feel ill or have any symptoms after your appointments, but follow the instructions after your 1st appointment. After the scan, women should wait 6 months before starting a pregnancy and men should wait 2 months before fathering a child.

We will send the report to your doctor.

Who can I call if I have any questions?

If you have any questions or concerns or if you need to cancel or reschedule your appointment, please contact the nuclear medicine department at 416 340 3311.

The nuclear medicine department is on the 1st floor of Toronto General Hospital, EB1 – 410, near the Eaton elevators.