

Having a Nuclear Medicine Test While Breastfeeding

Information for patients who are breastfeeding or chestfeeding

Read this resource to learn about:

- How nuclear medicine works
- Breastfeeding or chestfeeding before and after nuclear medicine tests
- What to do if you need to stop breastfeeding or chestfeeding
- What you need to know about radiation exposure



How does nuclear medicine work?

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

1. First you swallow, inhale, or get injected with a substance called a **radioactive tracer**.
2. The substance travels to the part of your body we want to see.
3. It gives off energy waves called gamma rays and a special camera builds these rays into pictures that help the doctor find very specific problems.

Nuclear medicine and breastfeeding

You do not need to stop breastfeeding or chestfeeding after most nuclear medicine tests because the radioactive tracer will not get into your breast milk. But, the tracers used in some tests do get into your breast milk.

If the kind of tracer you receive can get into your breast milk, you need to stop breastfeeding or chestfeeding for a while because we don't want the baby to swallow the tracer. The technologist will tell you if you need to stop breastfeeding or chestfeeding your baby, and for how long.

Important: Before we can do this test, you will need to agree to stop breastfeeding or chestfeeding.

Instructions for patients who need to stop breastfeeding

1. Feed your baby normally just before the start of the test.
2. After the test, express all the milk from both breasts at the times you usually feed your baby. Do this until you have been told it's OK to start breastfeeding or chestfeeding your baby again.
3. Throw away the expressed milk and do not give it to your baby.
4. After the time you have been told to stop breastfeeding is over, you can breastfeed or chestfeed again as usual.

What can I feed my baby instead?

- If you can, save breast milk before the start of the test and keep it in the fridge to feed your baby during the time you have been told not to breastfeed or chestfeed.
- You can use formula instead of breast milk.
- If you only have to miss 1 feeding, you can give your baby boiled water that has been cooled down again.

What do I need to know about radiation exposure?

Your baby will get a small amount of radiation exposure just by being held by you until the radioactive tracer leaves your body. If possible, do not hold your baby for long periods of time for the first 6 hours after your nuclear medicine test.



If you have any questions, please talk to the nuclear medicine technologist or your doctor before doing the test. We will ask you to sign a consent form that says you agree to do the test.

For your nuclear medicine test, the radioactive tracer you will be given is called: _____.

- You do NOT have to stop breastfeeding or chestfeeding your baby after your nuclear medicine test.
- You should stop breastfeeding or chestfeeding your baby for _____ after your nuclear medicine test.

Technologist: _____

Date: _____



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