

Nuclear Medicine and Pregnancy

Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn:

- How nuclear medicine tests work
- What happens if you need a nuclear medicine test when you are pregnant
- Who to talk to if you have any questions



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 (or radiation). To get the radiopharmaceutical in your body, you:

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

It travels to the part of your body that your doctor wants to see. When it reaches the right area, we take pictures of you. We 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.

What if I need a nuclear medicine test while I'm pregnant?

Usually, people who are pregnant don't have nuclear medicine tests to reduce any risks to the unborn baby before birth. But your doctor and nuclear medicine doctor think the test is the best way to get the information they need to diagnose your health issue.

They consider many things before they make this decision, including:

- how many months you are pregnant
- the risks of not getting the information the test can provide

What do you do to reduce any risks?

It is very unlikely the small amount of radiation you get during a nuclear medicine test will cause any harm to your unborn baby. But, we reduce the amount of radioactive tracer you get so you are even less exposed to the radiation.

What can I do to reduce any risks?

In some cases, drinking extra fluids (such as water or juice) and emptying your bladder (peeing) often for 2 days after your test can help reduce the amount of radiation you are exposed to.

Who can I talk to if I have any questions?

If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to the nuclear medicine technologist or your doctor before the test. We will ask you to sign a consent form. Signing this form means you agree to let us do the test.

You may also be able to see your results online through myUHN Patient Portal. Visit www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/myUHN to register.



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