

# PET and CT Scan

at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre

## Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn:

- What PET and CT scan is
- How to prepare
- What to expect
- Who to call if you have any questions

**Your PET or CT Scan is scheduled for:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Joint Department of Medical Imaging  
Princess Margaret Cancer Centre  
610 University Avenue – 3<sup>rd</sup> floor**



## **What is a PET scan?**

PET stands for **P**ositron **E**mission **T**omography. It is a type of test that takes pictures of the inside of your body. It uses a small amount of a radioactive sugar to help find certain diseases early. It can also show how well your treatment is working.

## **What is a CT scan?**

CT stands for **C**omputed **T**omography. It uses x-rays to show pictures of your bones and other parts of your body.

The technologist adds the PET pictures and CT pictures together. This way, the radiologist can get a better picture of what is happening in your body. This will help them decide whether there is something wrong in your body.

## **How long does a PET or CT scan take?**

You will be in the medical imaging department for 2 to 2½ hours. It takes some time to prepare for the scan.

The scan takes about 30 minutes. It may take another 15 minutes if the technologist needs to take extra pictures.

## **How do I prepare?**

### **For patients who recently had chemotherapy or radiation treatment:**

If you had chemotherapy or radiation treatment recently, let your doctor know the date of your last treatment. This will let them know the best time to schedule your PET scan.

The best time to have a PET scan is 3 weeks after your chemotherapy treatment or up to 6 weeks after your radiation treatment.

## For patients without diabetes:

### For 3 days before your scan:

- Don't exercise hard. For example, you can go for a walk but don't run.

### In the 6 hours before your scan:

- Don't eat anything, including candies or gum.
- You can drink up to 1 cup (250 millilitres) of water. Don't drink anything else.

### Can I take medicine in these 6 hours?

- Don't take medicine that has sugar in it.
- Don't take medicine you need to take with food.
- Keep taking all other medicines.

## For patients with diabetes:

For this scan to work, your blood sugar level has to be less than 10 mmol/L. If possible, it should be below 8.3 mmol/L. Check your blood sugar level often.

### What if I can't get my blood sugar below 10?

Call 416 946 4501, extension 3172 to reschedule your appointment. If your scan is scheduled on a Saturday and you need to contact the technologist about blood sugar or any other issue, call 416 946 4501 extension 6003.

### For 3 days before your scan:

- Don't exercise hard. For example, you can go for a walk, but don't run.

### On the day of your scan:

If you take insulin, metformin, glyburide, glucophage or diamicon:

- Take it 4 or more hours before your test.
- Eat a light breakfast that is high in protein and low in carbohydrates with your medicine **4 or more hours before the test**. For example, you can have a hard boiled egg or bacon with coffee or tea.
- Don't put sugar, milk or cream in your coffee or tea.
- Don't have toast, fruit or juice.

**If you don't take these medicines** (insulin, metformin, glyburide, glucophage or diamicon):

- Don't eat anything for 6 hours before your scan, including candies or gum.
- You can drink up to 1 cup (250 millilitres) of water in the 6 hours before your scan. Don't drink anything else.

**Can I take other kinds of medicine?**

- Don't take medicine that has sugar in it.
- Don't take medicine you need to take with food.
- Keep taking all other medicines.

**What should I bring to the appointment?**

- ✓ Your health card (OHIP card). If you do not have an OHIP card, please bring another form of government photo ID (such as a driver's license, passport, or other provincial health card).
- ✓ A list of medicines you are taking.
- ✓ Results from imaging tests (x-ray, bone scan, MRI or CT scan) you had in the last 3 months **at a different hospital**.  
You don't have to bring imaging if your tests were done at Toronto General or Toronto Western Hospitals, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, Mount Sinai or Women's College Hospital.

**Important:**

Tell us if you are breastfeeding (or chestfeeding) or if there is any chance that you are pregnant. Tell the technologist before you receive the injection.

## What can I expect?

1. When you arrive, the technologist explains the test to you.
2. They inject a radioactive sugar called FDG into your arm or hand with a small needle.
3. You wait in a special waiting area for 45 to 60 minutes. This gives the FDG time to get into the cells in your body.
4. You go into the scanning room and lie down on a special bed.
5. The bed moves in and out of the scanner. You need to lie still and follow the instructions the technologist gives you. The scan takes about 30 to 45 minutes.
6. When the scan is happening, the technologist will leave the room. They can still see you through a window and hear you through an intercom. You may hear buzzing or clicking noises from the scanner. These sounds are normal.

## What happens after the scan?

You can eat and drink normally, unless you are having another test that has special rules.

## 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 call 416 946 4501, extension 3172.



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