



Adrenal Gland Nuclear Medicine Exam

How to prepare for your exam

A nuclear medicine exam is used to study the structure and function of the adrenal glands. Read this handout to learn how to prepare for the exam, how the exam works, how the exam is performed, what you may feel during the exam, and how to get your results.

What is an adrenal gland nuclear medicine exam?

A nuclear medicine exam uses radioactive compounds to detect and treat many diseases. It is a form of radiology, because radiation is used to capture pictures of the human body.

Adrenal nuclear medicine refers to tests used to check the structure and function of the adrenal glands.

How does the exam work?

You will be given a small dose of radioactive material through an intravenous (IV) line. This compound, called a tracer, collects in the adrenal glands and gives off gamma rays. The gamma camera detects the rays and then produces pictures and measurements of the kidneys.

How should I prepare for the exam?

- You will receive an instruction sheet that will detail the specific actions to take before your exam.
- If you are on certain medications, your doctor may decide that you need to stop taking them or switch to another medication before your exam. Such medications include, but are not limited to, blood pressure medications, anti-depressants, anti-psychotics, diet pills and most over-the-counter nasal sprays. Do not stop or change your medications without first checking with your doctor.
- On the day before your exam begins, you will start drinking a potassium solution 3 times each day for 15 days. It is important to take this medicine to protect your thyroid.
- On the first day of your study, you will come to the Nuclear Medicine Department to receive a small amount of the radiotracer through an intravenous line (IV).

Questions?

Call 206-598-6200

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

Imaging Services:
206-598-6200

- You will return to the Nuclear Medicine Department 2 and 3 days after your injection for imaging of your adrenal glands. If you have had any CT, ultrasound, or MRI scans of the abdomen in the recent past at another clinic, please bring them with you on these days.
- If you are a woman of childbearing age, you must have a blood test within 4 weeks prior to the test to make sure that you are not pregnant.
- You may eat or drink before your exam because food and fluid in the stomach will not affect the quality of the images. You may do your normal daily activities.

How is the exam performed?

1. You will be given a small dose of radioactive material, usually intravenously (IV) but sometimes by mouth. This compound, called a tracer, collects in the adrenal glands and will give off gamma rays.
2. The gamma camera detects the rays. A computer will then produce pictures of the adrenal glands based on the detected gamma rays.
3. Two and three days after your injection, you will come back to the Nuclear Medicine Department to undergo imaging of your adrenal glands. The imaging involves lying flat while the camera takes pictures of your back.
4. The technologist will help make you comfortable. The imaging may take 30 to 60 minutes. You must not move during the time the camera is taking pictures. If you move, the pictures will be blurry and may have to be repeated.

What will I feel during the exam?

- Some minor discomfort during a nuclear medicine procedure may arise from the IV. Lying still on the exam table may be hard for some patients.
- Most of the radioactivity passes out of your body in urine or stool. The rest simply goes away over time.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

When the test is over, the nuclear medicine doctor will review your images, prepare a written report, and discuss the results with your doctor. Your doctor will then talk with you about the results and discuss your treatment options. Talk to your doctor to determine whether or not you will need to restart any medications that you stopped for this exam.

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