



PET Body Scan

Positron emission tomography

A PET scan is a simple way to take pictures of your body cells. It is often used to check for cancer, and brain memory problems. This handout will tell you about the PET scan and its common uses, what to expect when you arrive, how to prepare for the PET scan, how the procedure works, what to expect during the PET scan, and how you will get your results.

A positron emission tomography (PET) scan is a simple way to take pictures of your body's cells. It allows a specially trained doctor (a radiologist) to check for changes in your cells. A radioactive sugar, 18 FDG, is injected during the PET scan and allows us to image the metabolism of your body's cells.

What are some common uses of the PET scan?

PET scans are used most often to detect cancer and to check the effects of cancer treatments.

PET scans of the brain are used to evaluate patients who have memory loss, seizure problems, or brain tumors.

How do I prepare for a PET scan?

The instructions for how to prepare are based on the part of your body that will be scanned.

- Fast 12 hours before the exam. Do not eat or drink anything except water. You may take your prescribed medicines (except cough syrup) on the day of your exam if they can be tolerated on an empty stomach. If you are told not to take your medicines, do not take them. Do not chew gum, eat candy, or take vitamins.
- Please drink 6 to 8 glasses of water the day before the exam, and several on the day of the exam to ensure hydration.
- The last meal you eat before you begin your fast should be a low-carbohydrate meal.

- Do not exercise for 24 hours prior to the exam.
- Bring any prior imaging films, such as PET, CT, or MRI with you, if possible. These can be on films or CD-ROM. Our doctors will use them to compare to your new PET scan.
- Make sure that your appointment time is convenient for you. The precise timing of this study is very important, so please arrive 15 minutes prior to the scheduled time.
- Wear comfortable clothing and dress warmly, as some scanner rooms may be cold. Do not wear jewelry or metal on your clothes on the day of the exam.
- For your comfort, you may bring a CD to listen to during the PET scan. We provide warm blankets.
- Do not bring children or pregnant women with you, due to the radioactive material that will be injected.
- If a mild muscle relaxant is planned for your exam, you must have someone accompany you to drive you home.
- If your pelvis will be scanned, a bladder catheter (a tube that drains your bladder) may be placed before the PET scan.
- If you have diabetes, please call our staff at 206-598-3630 to discuss diet and medicine instructions as soon as possible.
- Please call Imaging Services at 206-598-3630 or Seattle Cancer Care Alliance (SCCA) at 206-288-7200 if you are currently on any granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF) medicines (such as Neupogen or Neulasta) or any red blood cell stimulating drugs (such as Epogen or Procrit).

PET scans study live cells in action.

What should I expect when I arrive?

A nuclear medicine technologist will help you to get ready for the scan. The technologist will start an intravenous (IV) line (a thin tube used to give you medicine and fluids) and check your blood sugar. The technologist will inject the radiotracer. After allowing the radiotracer to circulate for about 45 minutes, you will be taken to the PET scan area. You will be asked to lie on your back on the scanner table. Most scans take about 1 hour.

