



Moving oncology care forward so that our patients can look forward to life's moments.



Diagnostic scans:
What you need to know



Making life better

Your doctor may request some of these diagnostic tests to help diagnose, monitor and manage cancer. Here is a simple checklist to support you with the process.

What you should consider:

For all bookings



Ask your doctor or oncology nurse any questions you may have regarding this investigation



Make a booking with the appropriate radiology department – your doctor may have a preference for a specific unit



Confirm with your medical aid how the imaging test will be covered, especially for investigations such as CT, MRI and PET-CT scans



Inform your doctor if you are pregnant / trying to fall pregnant or if you have a pacemaker



Take along any previous X-rays or scans that may be relevant



Remove all body piercings. Leave jewellery at home as you may be asked to remove it for the examination

Mammogram¹



Try to schedule your mammogram for one to two weeks after your menstrual period starts as breasts can be tender the week before and during menstruation



Do not apply talcum powder, deodorant, perfumes, creams or lotions to the breast or underarms on the day of the scan



Inform the receptionist / radiographer if you have breast implants, have had previous breast surgery or biopsy, or if you are breastfeeding



You will be asked to remove your clothing from the waist up and change into a patient gown. Try to dress to easily accommodate this

Ultrasound²



In some cases, you may need to fast (not eat), take a laxative or use an enema depending on the organ being studied – your doctor will tell you if this is necessary



Abdominal (belly) ultrasounds may require a full bladder so you may need to drink plenty of water before the test. Please ask your doctor about this



Wear comfortable clothing even though you may need to change into a hospital gown

CT scan³



Inform your doctor if you have severe claustrophobia or anxiety. This may require you to be slightly sedated to undergo this scan. If so, you will not be able to drive home, so make sure you have a lift



In some cases, you may need to fast (not eat), take a laxative or use an enema depending on the organ being studied. Your doctor will tell you if this is necessary



Inform your doctor and radiographer if you are allergic / sensitive to iodine, seafood (seafood allergies may indicate an iodine intolerance) or contrast dyes



Inform the radiographer if you use dentures or hearing aids as you may need to remove them



Inform the radiographer if you have a pacemaker, infusion port or other implanted medical devices so that extra care can be taken when scanning those areas



During the scan you may feel like you are passing urine – being incontinent. This feeling is normal and you will find that you have not passed urine during the scan.

MRI scan⁴



Inform your doctor if you have severe claustrophobia or anxiety. This may require you to be slightly sedated to have this procedure. If so, you will not be able to drive home, so make sure you have a lift



In some cases, you may need to fast (not eat), take a laxative or use an enema depending on the organ being studied. Your doctor will tell you if this is necessary



Inform your doctor and radiographer if you are allergic / sensitive to iodine, seafood (seafood allergies may indicate an iodine intolerance) or contrast dyes



Inform the radiographer if you use dentures or hearing aids as you may need to remove them



You should never enter a MRI scanning room if you have a pacemaker, implanted defibrillator, cochlear ear implant, metal coils placed inside blood vessels or clips used on a brain aneurysm, without alerting your doctor first. **Make sure to tell the radiographer before entering the room**



Inform the radiographer and your doctor if you have any other permanent metal objects in your body e.g. staples, screws, plates, stents, artificial joints, shrapnel, tattoos or permanent makeup, artificial heart valves, infusion ports, implanted nerve stimulators etc.



The machine makes a lot of noise. Taking earplugs or headphones can help you if you are sensitive to noise



You may want to take an eye mask if you are sensitive to small spaces (claustrophobic) so that you cannot see the machine walls closely around you

Nuclear Medicine Scans⁷

Positron emission tomography (PET), Positron emission tomography – computed tomography (PET-CT), Single photon emission tomography (SPECT)



In some cases, you may need to fast (not eat), take a laxative or use an enema depending on the organ being studied. Your doctor will tell you if this is necessary



Inform the doctor about all your medications, vitamins and herbal supplements that you take as you may need to avoid some before the test



Inform your doctor and radiographer if you are allergic / sensitive to iodine, seafood (seafood allergies may indicate an iodine intolerance) or contrast dyes



Tracers will be given a few hours to a few days before the scan so factor that into your schedule



Ask your doctor or radiographer about precautions you need to take before, during and after the test to decrease your and others exposure to the radioactive substances used during the examination

References

- 1 John Hopkins Medicine. Mammogram Procedure. [online] [cited 2024 May 31]. Available from: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/treatment-tests-and-therapies/mammogram-procedure>
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- 3 Heyer CM, Thuring J, Lemburg SP, Kreddig N, Hasenbring M, Dohna M, et al. Anxiety of Patients Undergoing CT Imaging - An Underestimated Problem? *Acad Radio* 2015;22:105-112.
- 4 Stanford Health Care. Before the Computed Tomography (CT) Scan. [online] [cited 2024 May 31]. Available from: URL: <https://stanfordhealthcare.org/medical-tests/c/ct-scan/procedures/before.html>
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- 6 American Cancer Society. MRI for Cancer. [online] 2024 Feb 16 [cited 2024 May 31]. Available from: URL: <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/understanding-your-diagnosis/tests/mri-for-cancer.html>
- 7 American Cancer Society. Nuclear Medicine Scans for Cancer. [online] 2023 Aug 25 [cited 2024 May 31]. Available from: URL: <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/understanding-your-diagnosis/tests/nuclear-medicine-scans-for-cancer.html>

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