

Nuclear Medicine department

Information about your post-treatment thyroid scan

What is a post-treatment thyroid scan?

This scan is performed at least 6 months after your treatment for thyroid cancer. It is carried out as an outpatient procedure; there is no need for you to stay in hospital.

It is performed to check that the treatment that you received has been successful, and that no functioning thyroid tissue remains.

On your first day, you will be given an injection of a radioactive tracer. After 4 hours we will take the first set of pictures. You will then need to return on the following day and we will take a second set of pictures. If any thyroid tissue remains, this will be seen on the scan.

Is there any preparation for my thyroid scan?

The doctor looking after you will have discussed the preparation for the scan with you already. Depending on your individual case, you will have been advised to do **one** of the following:

- Continue taking your thyroid hormones and receive Thyrogen injections.** You will have been given an appointment to come to the clinic in the week before the scan to collect the Thyrogen and make arrangements for the Thyrogen injections, or
- Stop taking T3** (triiodothyronine or liothyronine) 2 weeks before the appointment, or
- Stop taking T4** (thyroxine or levothyroxine) 4 weeks before your appointment.

Other preparations

- Keep to a low iodine diet for 2 weeks prior to your first appointment in the nuclear medicine department.
- If you have had a CT scan with X-ray dye (contrast agent) in the past 2 months, please tell us as this can interfere with the scan.
- You should continue to take any other medication as usual.
- Please allow plenty of time to get to your appointment.
- Please do not bring along anyone who is pregnant or under 18 years of age.
- **You must tell us in advance if you know you are (or think that you may be) pregnant, or are breast feeding.**



What happens during my thyroid scan?

Our staff will fully explain the procedure to you when you arrive for your appointment.

Day 1

- A cannula (small tube) will be inserted into a vein either in your hand or arm, and then the radioactive tracer will be given slowly through it.
- It takes a few hours for the tracer to concentrate in the body, so you may leave the hospital.
- You must attend for the scan later in the day at the time given to you by the technologist.
- In the time between the injection and the scan we advise you to drink plenty of fluid and empty your bladder regularly, as this helps wash out the excess tracer from your body and also makes the images clearer.
- Before the scan we will ask you to have a drink of water to clear any remaining tracer from your throat which may interfere with the pictures, and you will be asked to empty your bladder.
- You will not be asked to undress, but you may be asked to remove metal objects.
- We will then ask you to lie on the scan bed. We will make sure you are as comfortable as possible for the scan, as it is extremely important that you remain as still as you can, especially your head and neck.
- The scan on day 1 lasts about an hour.

Day 2

Please attend promptly on day 2 at the time given to you by the technologist.

We only take pictures. There are no further injections.

We will again ask you to lie on the scan bed, and the scan will last about an hour.

You must continue your low iodine diet until after the scan on Day 1.

Day 3

You will need to return to the hospital on the day following your second scan so that we can take a blood sample from you to check the level of thyroglobulin, a blood test that will be monitored as part of your follow-up.

Will I feel anything during my scan?

There are no side effects from the tracer, and it will not make you feel sleepy or affect your ability to drive.

Having the pictures taken will not hurt, but if you are in a lot of pain or find it difficult to keep still please tell us.

What happens after my thyroid scan?

Once we have checked the technical quality of your scan and are happy we have all the information we need, you will be able to leave the department. A radiologist will report the scan and the results will be sent to the doctor looking after you. The doctor will write to you with the results of the scan and blood test within 4 weeks.

You may eat and drink as normal following the scan.

How safe is the scan?

There are small risks associated with the radiation that you will be exposed to for this test. However, the images give the doctors important information about your condition that helps in your treatment. The benefits of the information from the scan outweigh the small risks of exposure to radiation.

Are there any precautions to take in between the injection and the scans?

Following your injection, and for the rest of Day 1, you should try to avoid long periods of close contact with other people. This is to minimise their exposure to a small dose of radiation.

What are the benefits of my thyroid scan?

This scan gives valuable information about your condition, and along with blood tests, helps the doctors looking after you to assess your treatment.

What happens if I decide not to have the tracer injection and thyroid scan?

If you decide not to have the thyroid scan, please discuss this with the doctor looking after you.

What happens if I cannot keep my appointment?

If you cannot keep your appointment, contact the Nuclear Medicine department straight away, so that we can offer the appointment to someone else.

Please attend promptly at the time shown on the attached appointment letter.

If you have questions about this appointment, or any queries about the examination, please phone the number below:

Tel: **0161 446 3942/6**

Your schedule:

Start low iodine diet	
Clinic appointment to collect Thyrogen injections	
1st Thyrogen injection (district nurses)	
2nd Thyrogen injection (district nurses)	
Day 1: Radioactive tracer injection and scan	
Day 2: Scan	
Day 3: Blood test	

For further information

British Thyroid Foundation

www.btf-thyroid.org

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week