

Nuclear medicine department

# Information about your cardiac scan

## What is a cardiac scan?

A cardiac scan or cardiac ventriculography is used to evaluate the function and efficiency of your heart, especially the left ventricle which pumps blood around your body. It provides moving images of the blood flow through the heart which we are able to see on a gamma camera.

To perform this scan we need to label your blood with a small amount of a radioactive substance called a tracer.

## Is there any preparation for my cardiac scan?

- Please continue to eat and drink normally and continue to take your usual medication.
- Please allow plenty of time to get to your appointment, as the tracer is individually ordered for you and scans cannot normally be delayed.
- You should expect to be in the department for about one hour to one and a half hours.
- Please do not bring anyone with you who is pregnant or under 18 years of age.
- If you know that you have any problems with your heart, or think that you may have an irregular heart beat, please let us know before we start the test.
- 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 cardiac scan?

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

- We will give you two separate injections into a vein, usually in your arm or hand. The first injection is a substance which prepares the red blood cells for tagging with the radioactive tracer. Approximately 30 minutes later we will give you another injection containing the radioactive tracer. The scan is performed straight away so there is no need to wait.
- If you have a central venous line (either a PICC or Hickman line®), we will be able to give you the injections through it. If you have a Totally Implanted Vascular Access Device (TIVAD or Portacath®) you will need to attend the blood room before your appointment in order to get it accessed.



- We will ask you to lie on the scan bed. You will be connected to an ECG monitor during your scan, so that we can monitor your heart rate. 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.
- You will not be asked to undress. You may be asked to remove metal objects.
- Most scans last between 30 to 45 minutes.

### **Will I feel anything during my scan?**

The injection feels similar to having blood taken. There are no side effects from either injection, 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 cardiac scan?**

When 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.

Continue to drink plenty of fluid for the rest of the day and empty your bladder regularly. This helps wash out the tracer from your body more quickly. You may eat as normal.

The scan results will be sent to the consultant who referred you. We will not be able to give you any results on the day.

### **How safe is the examination?**

There are small risks associated with the radioactive tracer that you have been given. 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.

Following your injection, and for the rest of the day following your scan, 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 cardiac scan?**

The scan is an accurate way of monitoring the efficiency of the left ventricle which is an important factor in assessing heart performance. Some chemotherapy drugs can damage the heart muscle and reduce its efficiency.

Initially it allows the doctors looking after you to establish a base line function of your heart and to check for any pre-existing heart problems you may have. It may then be repeated periodically to monitor the effects of treatment.

### **What happens if I decide not to have a cardiac scan?**

If you decide not to have the cardiac scan, then 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 as soon as possible so that we can offer the appointment to someone else and make you a new appointment. **Please attend promptly at the time shown on the attached appointment letter.**

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

Tel: 0161 446 3942/6

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.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact [patient.information@christie.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@christie.nhs.uk)

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

