GUIDE

Bone scan

Your doctor has requested a bone scan. This booklet will answer some of the questions you may have.

What is a bone scan?

Your physician has requested an examination called a *bone scan*. This is a simple and painless way of taking pictures of your bones and joints using a radioactive tracer.

Do I need to prepare for the scan?

No special preparation is required. Food and drink will not interfere with this test.

What is involved?

When you arrive in the Nuclear Medicine department, a technologist will explain the entire procedure to you and then ask you if you have any questions. You will then receive an injection of a radioactive tracer into a vein in your arm. Depending on the information that your physician is looking for, this injection may be given while you are seated or in some cases, while you are lying on an imaging table, under a special camera. The amount of radioactivity injected is very small and will have no adverse effect on you. You will receive no more radiation than for an ordinary x-ray. If you are hospitalized the technologist will come to your room to perform the injection. You will then be taken to the Nuclear Medicine Division later.

There is then three to four hour wait; while the tracer accumulates in your bones. You are under no restrictions during this waiting period. You may eat and drink and are free to leave the department and return later. The technologist will ask you to drink approximately one liter of water during this waiting period.

Drinking more water makes the pictures easier to read for the doctor. You will experience no reaction to the tracer.

At the end of the waiting period you will be asked to lie down on a table and a special detector, called a gamma camera, will be placed close to the parts of your body being studied. Images will usually be taken over your whole body, but sometimes a certain part may be studied in detail. The camera does not produce radiation; it simply picks up signals (gamma rays) from the radioactive tracer which was injected. Therefore, even though many pictures may be taken, you will not be exposed to any further radiation. The procedure takes about 30 minutes.

Will it hurt?

Only the *pinprick* of the injection needle may hurt a bit. You may have had a blood test in the past. This is much the same.

Is the radiation dangerous?

The amount of radioactivity used for this test is quite small and will disappear by itself after two days.

Do I need to do anything after the scan?

No special precautions are needed after the scan. If you are travelling across any borders in the seven days after your scan, please ask us for further advice. Ports and airports have very sensitive radiation detectors which may pick up tiny amounts of radioactivity remaining after your scan. We will give you a letter that you can show to customs officials at ports or airports.

What happens to the results of the scan?

A specially trained doctor will examine the pictures. This is normally done soon after the end of the scan. A report is then sent to the doctor who asked us to do the scan. Your doctor will normally receive the report within one week.

Is there anything I should tell the staff before the scan?

If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, or are breastfeeding, please contact us before your appointment. If you are very claustrophobic, please contact us as well.

Any more questions?

We want your visit to be as pleasant as possible. If you have any questions, please ask the staff in the Nuclear Medicine department. You can telephone, or ask before the scan starts. **Our telephone number is 613-761-4831, option 8.**

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