



GUIDE



Lymphoscintigraphy scan



The Ottawa Hospital | L'Hôpital
d'Ottawa



Disclaimer

This is general information developed by The Ottawa Hospital. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified health-care provider. Please consult your own health-care provider who will be able to determine if this information is appropriate for your specific situation.

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

What is an Lymphoscintigraphy scan?

The lymphatic system includes lymph vessels, lymph nodes and lymph. Lymph vessels carry lymph throughout your body. Lymph is a colorless fluid that helps your body fight infection. As the lymph travels through the lymph vessels, it passes through lymph nodes. The lymph nodes act as filters and can trap foreign particles such as bacteria or viruses. The sentinel lymph node is the first lymph node that cancer is likely to travel from the cancer site. This Nuclear Medicine exam is done to help find the first lymph node that drains from the cancer site before surgery.

Do I need to prepare for the scan?

You will likely be required to fast after midnight for the surgery that you will have following the Nuclear Medicine procedure. Check with your doctor if you are uncertain. There is no specific preparation for the Lymphoscintigraphy scan.

What is involved?

When you arrive in the Nuclear Medicine department, a technologist will explain the procedure to you in full detail and answer any of your questions. The technologist will then ask you to lie on an imaging table to begin the study. With a very fine needle, the technologist will inject a small amount of radioactive tracer close to and around the skin lesion site. With a special Nuclear Medicine camera, images are taken to map the path the tracer follows and to see where the sentinel node (first lymph node) is located for this site. The technologist will then place a mark on your skin that corresponds to the location of

the sentinel node found. This scan can take up to two hours to complete and it is important to remain very still. Normally this test is performed on the day of your surgery, but in some cases it may be performed the day before your surgery. Once all of the images are completed, you will be able to leave the department with no ill effects from the test.

Will it hurt?

Only the *pinprick* of the injection needle may hurt a bit. You may also experience a burning sensation as the tracer is injected under the skin. This is normal and usually passes quickly.

Is the radiation dangerous?

The amount of radioactivity used for this test is quite small and will disappear by itself within a day or two following the test. There are no side effects from this test.

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 before your surgery.

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

Yes, if you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, please telephone us to let us know. Also, please telephone us if you are breastfeeding.

What if I have 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 before your test day, or ask before the scan starts. **Our telephone number is 613-761-4831, option 8.**

