



GUIDE



Salivary gland 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 personal physician who will be able to determine if this information is appropriate for your specific situation.

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

What is a salivary gland scan?

The salivary glands are glands located around the mouth, nose and ears. These are primarily concerned with the production of the clear liquid released into the mouth that lubricates the mouth and starts the breakdown of chewed food. The saliva is made up essentially of water, enzymes, protein and mucin. A salivary gland scan is a medical test that requires the use of a camera specially designed for the purpose and a radioactive chemical that acts as a tracer which together give the required images of the salivary glands. The procedure helps the doctor to better analyze the cause of problems with your salivary glands.

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 initially ask you to remove any jewelry around the area to be scanned. You will then be asked to lie on an imaging table and a special camera called a gamma camera will be placed over your neck area. The technologist will then inject a small amount of radioactive tracer into a vein in your arm. This tracer will then be picked up by the gamma camera and a series of pictures will be taken for about 30 minutes. It is essential that you remain very still for the duration of the scan in order to avoid any blurring of the images. At one point during the images, the

technologist will place a small amount of a harmless solution in your mouth that will stimulate your salivary glands. Overall, the duration of the scan should take about an hour.

Will it hurt?

Only the pinprick of the injection needle may hurt a bit. You may have had a blood test in the past.

Is the radiation dangerous?

The amount of radioactivity used for this test is quite small and will disappear by itself soon after the scan is finished. (Most of the radioactivity disappears within one day and any remaining traces disappear within one week.) The amount of radiation is similar to that from an x-ray examination.

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?

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.**

