FDG PET/CT Scan
Information for patients and carers

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Introduction

The information contained on this leaflet is intended to provide patients and carers with the basic facts about an FDG PET/CT scan.

1. What is an FDG PET/CT scan?

FDG is a sugar (glucose) labelled with a small amount of radioactivity which goes to parts of the body that use glucose for energy. PET/CT images are acquired on a single scanner. An FDG PET/CT scan is used to assess the presence, location and severity of cancers. It is also used for other conditions such as infection/inflammation and conditions which affect the brain.

2. What are the risks of an FDG PET/CT scan?

You will be given an injection into a vein which will contain a small amount of radioactivity and will be imaged using X-rays during the CT part of the study. The radioactivity leaves your body quickly and will not make you feel unwell. Your doctor has considered that the low risk linked to the radiation from this valuable test is safe for you to receive but as radiation can harm unborn children then please let us know if you are, or might be pregnant, before we start the test. Also, if you are breastfeeding, please let us know.

3. What will happen if I choose not to have an PET/CT scan?

There may be an alternative test you can have. You should discuss the various options with your doctor.

4. What alternatives are available?

There are numerous ways to assess cancers, inflammation and the brain, and you should discuss with your doctor which tests may be suitable.

5. How should I prepare for an FDG PET/CT scan?

You should have nothing to eat or drink except plain water for 6 hours before your appointment time. You may continue any medication that can be taken with water and tolerated on an empty stomach. If you are diabetic please contact us at least 2 days before your scan on 0845 1555000 extension 70503.

6. What happens during a FDG PET/CT scan?

You will be asked to lie flat on a motorised imaging couch and will pass through the camera during imaging - your face will only be enclosed for a very brief time. Occasionally images are required immediately after injection of the radioactive tracer. The main scan is acquired 60-90 minutes after injection, and you will be asked to rest during this time. You will need to keep as still as possible during imaging which normally takes 30 minutes but may take up to an hour. Please note: FDG is produced off site on a daily basis and occasionally there is a production problem. If this happens we may need to cancel your appointment at short notice but will rebook you for the first available convenient date.

6. What should I expect after the FDG PET/CT scan?

Once the scans have been checked for completeness you can leave and resume normal activity. You will be able to drive as the test does not cause drowsiness. Although the level of radiation is small we advise you to avoid close contact with children and pregnant women for the rest of the day. The test will be interpreted by a Nuclear Medicine Specialist and a written report sent to your referring doctor, usually within 24 hours. If you are planning to travel abroad in the near future you may trigger one of the very sensitive radiation detectors located at airports, train stations or seaports. In the unlikely event that this occurs there is no need to be alarmed. Customs officials will understand what has happened, however, we recommend you carry your appointment letter with you as proof of your recent test.