

## Lymphoscintigraphy (sentinel lymph node scan)

This fact sheet is designed to inform you of what lymphoscintigraphy (a sentinel lymph node scan) is, and what is involved in having one. Please read it before having your scan. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

### What is a sentinel lymph node scan?

A lymphoscintigraphy, or sentinel lymph node scan, is a test used to find which lymph nodes are the first to get fluid drainage from the area of the body near where you have a lump. These scans are usually done in the breast area. They are usually done just before you have a biopsy or surgery.

For this test, you will have one or more injections of a small amount of a radiopharmaceutical (radioactive tracer) into the area of interest. This might be quite painful. The tracer goes with the fluid as it drains into nearby lymph nodes. A special camera is used to take pictures which show the lymph nodes that are the first to drain fluid.

### Procedure

Sentinel lymph node scans require no special preparation, although you may need to be fasting for the biopsy or surgery after that.

**You should tell your doctor and imaging staff if you have any allergies, or are pregnant, or think you might be pregnant or are breastfeeding.**

The first scan will take about 20 minutes. You will need to come back to have more pictures taken about two hours later. The doctor doing the test will usually put a mark on the skin surface to help the surgeon find the lymph nodes during your operation. It is important that you do not wash this mark off before the surgery.

### After the procedure

A nuclear medicine physician (a specialist doctor) will assess your images then send the results to your doctor. You should not have any issues after the scan.

### Risks

While all nuclear medicine tests involve some exposure to radiation, the amount is very small and the risk of side effects is very low. Allergic reactions are very rare and almost always minor.

### For more information

Nuclear medicine: Answering your questions by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation: [www.ansto.gov.au/cs/groups/corporate/documents/webcontent/mdaw/mdax/~edisp/acstest\\_038604.pdf](http://www.ansto.gov.au/cs/groups/corporate/documents/webcontent/mdaw/mdax/~edisp/acstest_038604.pdf)

About sentinel node biopsy, by Verywell: [www.verywell.com/what-to-expect-during-sentinel-node-biopsy-430109](http://www.verywell.com/what-to-expect-during-sentinel-node-biopsy-430109)

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency: [www.arpsansa.gov.au](http://www.arpsansa.gov.au)

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