Fact sheet

Gallium scan

This fact sheet tells you what a gallium scan is and what is involved. Please read this sheet before your procedure. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

What is a gallium scan?

Gallium is a radioactive metal. A gallium scan is a nuclear medicine test used to find infections and inflammation in the body, especially in the soft tissues. For example, it can find an abscess, a nodule in conditions like sarcoidosis, or a respiratory infection.

A bone scan (see *Bone scan* fact sheet) may also be needed if your doctor is looking for an infection of the bone.

What is involved?

No special preparation is needed for a gallium scan.

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

For the first part of the test, a small amount OF gallium will be injected through a cannula (a thin needle) into a vein in your arm.

The second part happens two to three days later, when a special camera is used to take pictures of your body to show where the gallium has gone.

The second part takes around 60 to 90 minutes.

What happens after the scan?

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

Are there any risks?

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

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

Medline Plus, by the US National Library of Medicine: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003450.htm

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency: www.arpansa.gov.au

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