



Information for carers and comforters accompanying patients for nuclear medicine diagnostic imaging

This leaflet is for family members/friends* of the patient who will accompany a patient during a nuclear medicine diagnostic procedure to provide physical or emotional support. The leaflet explains what the risks are and will ask you to sign your understanding of these. Normally, the carer and comforter should be over 18 years old and should not be pregnant. However, if no alternatives can be found, the role of carer and comforter for diagnostic procedures could be performed by a young adult or pregnant person, if necessary.

** Staff asked to act as a carer and comforter must be doing so as a family/friend of the patient, i.e. unrelated to their role. They should ask the operator to report the circumstances to the Medical Physics Expert (MPE) (0118 322 7355/7370).*

About the procedure

Diagnostic nuclear medicine imaging usually involves injecting the patient with a small amount of radioactive material. We use a machine called a gamma camera to detect this radiation, providing us with vital information to help with the diagnosis.

There will be a low level of radiation present around the patient for several hours after the injection. This radiation fades naturally but some may be passed out in the patient's urine, saliva and sweat. Being present to assist a patient, e.g. a child or vulnerable adult, or exposure to bodily fluids from the patient during this time makes you a 'carer and comforter' as defined by radiation regulations.

What are the risks, necessary precautions, and who should not act as a carer or comforter?

- There is radiation all around us – from the earth and the atmosphere.
- The dose you will receive as a carer or comforter depends on how close you are to the patient and what procedure is being carried out, but is equivalent to a few days' or weeks' worth of natural background radiation.
- While the risk to an unborn child is very small we recommend that someone who is or may be pregnant does **not** act as a carer and comforter.
- Carers and comforters must act responsibly and follow the instructions of the nuclear medicine operator.

- The risk from such a low dose of radiation is very small, but if you are worried about acting as a carer and comforter, let the operator know that you do not wish to proceed.

Procedure:		
Activity, isotope and radio-pharmaceutical:		
Expected maximum exposure:	Up to _____ mSv or ____ weeks' background	
Patient hospital number:		
Operator completing this form:		Practitioner: TM / CF

You should limit how much time you spend in very close contact with the patient – except where there physical or emotional needs require it. This applies until _____

You should be careful handling all bodily fluids, taking care to wash your hands and any surfaces until _____

If you have any questions after reading this leaflet please ask the radiographer before you sign the declaration below.

Please sign the declaration below:

I have read and understood the information above and I will follow the instructions of the radiographer/technician. I understand that I will receive a very small dose of radiation by acting as the patient's carer and comforter.

Carer / Comforter name (print)	Signature	Date

Please note, we will keep a record of this exposure for up to 2 years to demonstrate how we are complying with the regulations. It will not be used for any other purpose.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.
