



Having a SeHCAT scan

A SeHCAT scan is a diagnostic procedure which looks at one aspect of the function of your bowel. SeHCAT stands for selenium homocholeic acid taurine and this test involves swallowing a capsule which contains a very small amount of radioactive powder, followed by imaging with equipment called a gamma camera. The capsule contains a synthetic bile salt that has been “labelled” so that it contains some radioactivity. Its chemical name is [75Se] tauroselcholic acid. The test shows how well your gut is able to absorb bile salts – whether the bile salts are absorbed normally or if these are being excreted from the gut too quickly.

Is it safe for me to have the scan?

The small risk from this radiation dose is outweighed by the useful information that will be gained by having the scan. There is a table at the end of the leaflet with radiation risks from various sources. Ask if you want any more information. All investigations are vetted to make sure this is the appropriate test for you. If you don't understand why you need to have this scan please speak to the doctor who referred you.

For female patients

Due to the radiation involved, there is a very small risk to an unborn or breastfeeding child. Therefore, it is important that you let us know in advance if you are, or may be, pregnant or are currently breastfeeding.

Preparation for your scan

The test does not take long, but it requires 3 separate attendances – with 2 appointments on the first day and another one 7 days later. It is important that you attend each of the appointment times otherwise the test will be inconclusive.

Please contact Medical Physics on the number at the end of this leaflet:

- If you are having any procedures related to your problem in the week before the first appointment or between the 2 appointments,
- If you are taking any of these drugs which may interfere with the test:
 - Loperamide, also called **Immodium**
 - Colestyramine, also called **Questran**
 - Colestipol hydrochloride, also called **Colestid**
 - Colesevelam, also called **Welchol**
 - Painkillers such as Codeine or Morphine.
 - Pregabalin

- Amitriptyline
- Aluminium hydroxide

You may be asked to stop these medications for a temporary period during the length of the test.

Your scan

When you arrive in the department you will be given a capsule to swallow with water. There are no side effects from the radioactive capsule. No special precautions are necessary because the radiation dose used is very small, so it is quite safe for you to be near other people.

After taking the capsule, you can eat and drink normally. You will be asked to return to the department **1 hour later and then again 7 days later** for another set of images.

On both appointments, the images are taken the same way. To take the images, you will be asked to lie flat on your back on a bed and the camera will be above you. The image will take 5 minutes. You do not have to undress for this scan but any metal items such as a belt should be removed. You will not be enclosed in a tunnel and you will not be left alone during the scan.



After your scan

After the images have been taken, you may leave the department.

Your results

The results of this test will be sent to your consultant who requested the test. Your clinician will discuss what your test result means.

Contacting us

Medical Physics Department, Level 1 North Block, Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00pm. If you have any questions about your treatment, please ask the staff looking after you or telephone 0118 322 7355 or email: rbb-tr.physics@nhs.net

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

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

RBFT Physics & Clinical Engineering Department, March 2026. Next review due: March 2028.

The table below is a simple guide to the levels of radiation risks for various examinations. These are measured in millisieverts (mSv).

Source of exposure (using RBFT local diagnostic reference levels (DRLs) for Nuclear Medicine)	Dose
Having a chest x-ray	0.014 mSv
Taking a transatlantic flight	0.08 mSv
Bile salt absorption (SeHCAT)	0.3 mSv
UK average annual radiation dose	2.6 mSv
CT scan of the chest – CT scan of whole spine	6.6 mSv – 10 mSv