

Having a VQ lung scan as an outpatient

A VQ scan is a nuclear medicine test that looks at your lungs. There can be two parts to the scan. One part looks at the blood flow to your lungs (this is called the perfusion) and the other part looks at the airflow to your lungs (called the ventilation). By comparing the two sets of pictures it is possible to investigate various lung conditions, but it is most commonly used to detect a pulmonary embolism (PE). This is a blockage of one of the arteries in the lung caused by a blood clot. You may need to have both parts of the test or just one.

Is it safe for me to have the scan?

For this scan it is necessary to inject a small amount of radioactive tracer, called a radiopharmaceutical, in order to take the pictures. The small risk from this radiation dose is outweighed by the information that will be gained by having the scan. 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

If you know that you are pregnant, or there is any chance that you may be pregnant, then please tell staff in the department where you will be having your lung scan so that they can discuss this with you. In urgent cases it is still safe for you to have a lung scan even if you are pregnant because the risk to your unborn child is very low. Also contact the department if you are breastfeeding, as we may give you special instructions.

Preparation for your scan

There are no special preparations for a lung scan. You can eat, drink and take any medicines as normal.

Your scan

For the perfusion part of the scan a small amount of radioactive tracer will be injected into a vein in your arm or hand. You may have had a blood test in the past; this is much the same. You may feel the 'pinprick' of the needle a bit, but that is all.

If you need to have the ventilation part of the scan you will also be asked to breathe in air mixed with a small amount of radioactivity. You will be shown how to do this using a special tube and mouthpiece. You will not have to hold your breath.

You will not be left on your own – there will always be someone immediately available.

There are two different gamma cameras used in the department. You may be asked to sit on a chair or to lie flat on your back on a special couch. The scan can take up to 45 minutes and it is very important that you keep still during this time.



After your scan

It is very unlikely that you will feel any side effects after the scan, but if you think that you have please let the Nuclear Medicine Department know. You may continue all your normal activities unless you have been advised otherwise.

Your results

Your VQ lung scan will be looked at by a specialist doctor, who will issue a report. The report will be sent to the doctor who requested your scan rather than to your GP. This is because the doctor who requested your scan will have all the results from other tests and will be able to tell you how the result of your scan affects your care.

If you have any questions about your treatment, please ask the staff looking after you or telephone 0118 322 7355 (fax: 0118 322 7377)

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Reception: Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00pm

For more information about the Trust, visit our website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This information can be made available in other languages and formats upon request

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