

# Having a radioiodine diagnostic scan after thyroid ablation therapy

Department of Nuclear Medicine

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: April 2025

Next review: April 2028

Leaflet number: 1071 Version: 3

## Introduction

Your consultant has asked for you to have a scan. This is a follow up to your treatment with radioactive iodine (thyroid ablation therapy). This will show how successful the treatment has been.

You will have 2 appointment:

1. We will give you a capsule to swallow. This has a small amount of radioactive iodine. This is a much lower dose than what you received for your first treatment. You will not need to stay in hospital.
2. You will have a scan.

This leaflet tells you about:

- what will happen at the hospital.
- what you need to do before and after the scan.

## Before your appointment, you must tell us if:

- you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant, or have just missed a period.
- you are breastfeeding. You will need to stop breastfeeding for 8 weeks before your first appointment. You **cannot** breastfeed that child again. Please talk about this with your consultant.
- you cannot control when you pee (incontinence problems). Radioactive substances will be in your pee and you may need special instructions because of this.
- you have problems with your memory or learning difficulties.
- you need an interpreter (please tell us at least 3 days before your appointment).

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## How do I prepare for the scan?

Your consultant will have given you a date to stop taking your thyroid medication. Please make sure that you do this or the test will not work.

## Your 1st appointment

We will give you a radioiodine capsule to swallow with a drink of water. The size is similar to a paracetamol. Let us know in advance if you have difficulty swallowing capsules.

**Do not eat or drink for 2 hours before. Do not eat or drink 2 hours after taking the capsule.**

You will be able to drive or use public transport. If you need hospital transport, please contact us on 0116 258 5627.

After swallowing the capsule your body will have some radioactivity. This will go down with each day. Most of this will leave your body through your pee and sweat. Drink plenty of fluids to help speed up this process.

**For the next 7 days follow the advice below:**

- flush the toilet twice and make sure you wash your hands well. Men should sit down when going for a pee.
- make sure you wash your hands well before preparing food. Wash all your cutlery thoroughly.
- There will also be some limits on your contact with other people (see advice on next page).

## Advice to follow after you have swallowed the capsule

You will have some restrictions. We will give you a 'yellow card'. This is similar to the one you got after your treatment. Carry this with you at all times while the restrictions apply. Show this to healthcare workers if you go to see your GP or have to go to the hospital as a patient.

- For the next 5 days make sure you stay at least 1 metre away from adults and children over 5 years of age. This is with whom you have regular contact with. This may delay your return to work.
- For the next 5 days sleep in a separate bed from your partner. The beds should be at least 1 metre apart. This distance still applies if the beds are in rooms next to each other.
- For 15 days you should keep a distance of 1 metre from children aged 5 years and younger and pregnant women with whom you have regular contact with.
- You may have to take some time off work. This will depend on your job and how close you have to get to others. We will discuss this with you at your first appointment.
- If you plan to travel abroad in the 6 months after your scan, you may have to pass through radiation detectors at ports and airports. We will give you a letter about the dose you have received. You can show this to the security officers if needed. We cannot guarantee that you will not have any difficulties when travelling abroad.

- If you are planning on starting a family you will need to delay this after your scan. 6 months delay for female patients or 4 months delay for male patients.

If you have any concerns about the restrictions please contact the department and ask to speak to a physicist.

## Your 2nd appointment

1 week after you have been given the radioiodine capsule, you will need to return to the same department for your scan:

1. You will need to lay still on a couch for about 40 minutes.
2. A camera that is sensitive to the radioiodine will take images of your whole body. You do not need to undress. You will need to remove any metal objects on your clothing.
3. A radiologist will look at your images straight away. They may decide that more imaging is needed. This could be a low dose CT scan. We will let you of this at the time.

## Are there any risks?

It is very unlikely that you will have any side effects from the radioactive capsule.

There is a small risk with the radiation you get by having this scan.

Ionising radiation can cause cell damage. After many years or decades it can turn into cancer. We are all at risk of getting cancer during our lifetime. This will happen to about 50% of people at some point in their life.

The dose of radiation you will get from this test is very small. It is the same dose you would get from the environment in around 1.7 years. Having this test will add only a very small chance of this happening to you. In fact, the risks from missing a serious disorder by not having this test may be much greater.

## How will I get my results?

The images from your scan will be looked at by a radiologist and the results will be passed onto your consultant. They will talk to you about them at your next outpatient appointment.

## Useful information for your appointments

You may wish to bring a relative or friend with you. Friends and relatives will not be allowed into the room during the procedure unless we need their help.

Please do not bring children with you to your appointment. Radiation is more dangerous for children and pregnant women than for adults. Do not bring them into the Nuclear Medicine Department unless they are coming for a scan.

## Directions to the Nuclear Medicine Department

Leicester Royal Infirmary, Level 0, Sandringham Building (behind the multi storey car park).

## Contact details

For specific information about your scan, please contact:

Leicester Royal Infirmary: 0116 258 5627

Leicester Radiopharmacy Service: 0116 258 5579

The answering machine is checked during office hours.

If you have a question about your medical condition please contact your GP or the doctor who made your referral.

## More information

Useful websites:

[www.bnms.org.uk](http://www.bnms.org.uk)

[www.radiologyinfo.org](http://www.radiologyinfo.org)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)