

Stopping breastfeeding altogether for certain radioactive tests

Department of Nuclear Medicine

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: January 2025

Next review: January 2028

Leaflet number: 1210 Version: 2

Introduction

This leaflet is for breastfeeding individuals having any of the following tests:

- ☐ ^{32}P Phosphate
- ☐ ^{131}I Iodide
- ☐ Other: _____

Your doctor would like you to have a nuclear medicine test which involves radiation. You will have received another leaflet which will tell you about your test.

There are special instructions in this leaflet which breastfeeding individuals need to follow. It also answers some questions you may have.

Why do I need to stop breastfeeding for the test?

During the test we will give you a small amount of radioactive tracer. Different tests involve different levels of radiation. Different types of tracers go to different body parts.

Some of the tracer may go into your breastmilk and stay for some time. If your child drinks this milk they could take in some of the radioactive substance. We advise you to stop breastfeeding altogether. **You will not go back to breastfeeding after your test.**

For some specific tracers, we can advise you to stop breastfeeding weeks before your test. This is to lower your production of breast milk. This will help to lower the radiation dose to your breast tissue when the tracer is given to you.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit 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

Why use radioactivity?

Different types of tests tell your doctor different things. Your doctor thinks that a nuclear medicine test using radiation is the best type of test for you.

How much radiation will my child get?

If you follow the advice in this leaflet, your child will not get any radiation from the radioactivity in your breast milk. This is because we advise you to stop breastfeeding altogether.

How will I feed my child?

- You can start to wean your child off breast milk before starting your test. You can express and store your milk before the start of the test. You can use this milk after your test.
- If your child sometimes uses a bottle or trainer cup you can use this to feed them.

If you need help with expressing and storing your milk or feeding your child in other ways, please ask your midwife, your health visitor or a voluntary breastfeeding counsellor (see details below).

More information and guidance is available from these organisations:

- For advice on how to express and store your milk, visit the NHS website:
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/breastfeeding-and-bottle-feeding/breastfeeding/expressing-breast-milk/>
- National Childbirth Trust: 0300 330 0700 <https://www.nct.org.uk/>
- La Leche League GB: 0345 120 2918 <https://www.laleche.org.uk/>
- National Breastfeeding Helpline: 0300 100 0212
- Association of Breastfeeding Mothers: <https://abm.me.uk/>

Will I be able to breastfeed future children?

You will be able to breastfeed future children. You will need to stop breastfeeding your current child. We may advise you to delay pregnancy for up to 6 months after your test.

Getting to your appointment

For patients who meet eligible criteria, our patient transport service is available if you need transport to and from your appointment. Please see our website:

<https://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk>

Directions to Nuclear Medicine:

- Leicester Royal Infirmary: Level 0, Sandringham Building (behind the multi-storey car park).
- Glenfield Hospital: the department is best reached from the east entrance.

Contact details

For specific information about your test, please contact (answering machine is checked during office hours):

- Leicester Royal Infirmary: 0116 258 5627
- Glenfield Hospital: 0116 258 3850
- Leicester Radiopharmacy Service: 0116 258 5579

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

Further information

Useful websites:

www.bnms.org.uk

www.radiologyinfo.org

www.patient.co.uk

