

Having sentinel node injections and scanning before melanoma surgery

Nuclear Medicine

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: July 2024

Next review: July 2027

Leaflet number: 482 Version: 3

What is a sentinel node injection and scan?

This procedure uses a small amount of radioactivity to allow your surgeon to locate the sentinel lymph nodes. These are the first lymph nodes to which any fluids from the melanoma will drain. This will be done by one of the specialist Nuclear Medicine staff on the morning of your surgery. Once you have been booked in by the ward, a member of staff will bring you to the Nuclear Medicine department. A taxi will be booked to take you to the Nuclear Medicine department at a different hospital, if needed.

You do not need to do anything to prepare for the injection and scan. Your surgeon will tell you if you need to do anything before for the surgery itself.

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. This is because radioactive substances can come out in breast milk and you may be told to stop breastfeeding for a short time.
- You have problems holding your pee (incontinence). This is because radioactive substances will be in your pee (urine) 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
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

What happens during the sentinel node injection and scan?

The Nuclear Medicine procedure will be explained to you and you can ask any questions.

The procedure usually involves having 4 radioactive injections around your melanoma scar from your previous surgery. You should not have any ill effects from this. Some patients do have a stinging feeling, which will quickly pass.

After the injection, we will use our scanner (called a gamma camera) to take images at different times and at several different angles. This will depend on the location of your melanoma scar, but the exact details will be explained on the day of your test.

The gamma camera can detect the radiation from the injections. The images it produces can help the surgeons to find the sentinel nodes. You will also have a CT scan during the same procedure. This will help the surgeons to be more accurate.

The camera itself will not cause any pain or discomfort and makes very little noise.

During the scan you will need to lie as still as possible on an imaging couch for up to 40 minutes at a time.

How long will it take?

The injections take a few minutes, and you will have your scan straight afterwards.

The scan takes 1.5 to 2 hours in total, but you will not need to lie on the scanning bed for the whole of this time.

In between taking the images you may be able to sit in our waiting area. We may ask you to walk up and down the corridor for some of the time. This can help to speed up the drainage of the injection into the sentinel nodes. After the scan you will go back to the ward. A taxi will be arranged, if needed.

Your appointment for surgery

The surgical team will contact you about your appointment date for surgery. If you have not yet had any details please contact them as soon as possible.

Are there any risks?

Ionising radiation can cause cell damage that may, after many years or decades, turn cancerous. We are all at risk of getting cancer during our lifetime. About 50% of people will get cancer 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 about 15 days. Having this test will only increase your risk of getting cancer by a very small amount. The risks from missing a serious disorder by not having this test may be much higher.

What happens after the test?

It is important that for the next 24 hours after your injection you:

- Flush the toilet twice after use. Men should sit down when going for a pee.
- Wash your hands thoroughly each time you use the toilet.

You can come into contact with other people as normal. You can usually return to work without any problem, but please ask staff for advice if you work with radiation or in the photographic industry.

Relatives and children

Please do not bring children or pregnant women with you. Radiation is more dangerous for children and pregnant women.

More information

For advice on hospital transport, see the information on our website:

<https://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/patients/patient-and-visitor-services/patient-transport-travel/>

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

Glenfield Hospital: 0116 258 3850

Leicester Royal Infirmary: 0116 258 5627

Leicester Radiopharmacy Service: 0116 258 5579

If you have a question about your medical condition please contact your GP or the doctor who sent you for this test.

Useful websites:

www.bnms.org.uk

www.radiologyinfo.org

www.patient.co.uk

www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/aboutus/departments-services/imaging-services/nuclear-medicine/

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