

# Positron Emission Tomography (PET Scan) Pre- & Post-Procedure Instructions

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## **What is a PET scan?**

A PET scan is an imaging study that is used to demonstrate the function of organs and tissues using a radioactive drug (tracer). The tracer which is injected has a low-level of radioactivity and collects in areas of the body which often correspond to areas of disease. For example, in patients with lung and esophageal cancer, the tracer accumulates in the cancer, lymph nodes to which it has spread, and other areas of metastasis (spread). By identifying signs of distant spread of the cancer or lack of such spread, the PET scan helps the physician stage the tumor.

## **What happens during the procedure?**

The PET technologist injects a low-level radioactive material (tracer) into the patient's vein. The patient lies down on an examining table that slides into the PET machine. The technologist then scans the body to obtain images of areas in which the radioactive tracer has accumulated. A "positive" PET scan shows areas of abnormal uptake of the tracer. A "negative" PET shows no abnormal uptake of the tracer.

## **What happens after the procedure?**

The PET technologist sends the complete report to the radiologist, who interprets the results.

## **How do I prepare for this procedure?**

- The night before the procedure, eat a light meal such as soup and salad.
- Do not eat or drink anything 6 hours prior to the procedure.

## **What are the risks associated with this procedure?**

- an allergic reaction (very rare)
- radiation exposure of a unborn baby if the patient is pregnant, or of a child if the patient is breast feeding

## **When should I call my doctor?**

For any signs of an allergic reaction occurring within the first few hours of the scan - fever, itching, hives, nausea or sneezing.

## **Who should I call if I have questions?**

- Please contact our clinic at 734-936-8857 during office hours (Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.).
- After hours, holidays, and on weekends call Hospital Paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the General Thoracic Surgery Resident on call.

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