

The PET Centre

at St Thomas' Hospital and
the Cancer Centre at Guy's

Your guide to having a PET-CT scan



What is a PET-CT scan?

PET-CT (positron emission tomography with computed tomography), is a safe and easy scanning method.

It shows us how the tissues in the body are working, and helps us to identify organs or tissues that are not working normally. With PET-CT, we inject you with a tracer dye (often a weak radioactive form of sugar) then scan you. The tracer shows up on the scan. Using this method we can get important information about many conditions affecting different parts of the body, which will help your doctor to plan the right treatment for you.

Do you need to confirm your appointment?

Yes. It is very important that you call us to confirm your appointment. It is also important that you allow plenty of time to get to the PET Centre, as scans generally cannot be delayed.

You must tell us in advance if you know or think that you are pregnant, are breastfeeding, or are the main carer of small children. We may need to give you extra information. In the event of self-isolation, please tell us as soon as possible.

Eating or drinking

You will be asked not to eat, and to drink only plain water, before some scans. Please check your appointment letter carefully as it contains important information about not eating before your scan. If you have diabetes, please contact us, **t: 020 7188 4988** for extra information about fasting times.

How long will the scan take?

This will depend on the type of scan, but you should expect to be in the department for 2-3. You will usually spend about 30 minutes in the scanner.

Can you bring someone with you?

We are encouraging patients to attend appointments alone. If you need them, a relative or friend may accompany you, but they will be asked to wait outside. It is very important that you do not bring children or pregnant women to accompany you to the department.

What should you wear?

We suggest that you wear something warm, loose and comfortable. As part of the examination includes a CT scan, it is important that you are not wearing any metal – including jewellery, watches, zips, and bra hooks – during the scan, as this may interfere with the scan. A hospital gown will be provided.

During the scan

This will depend on the type of scan, and will be fully explained to you by our staff when you arrive. We will insert a small needle into a vein in your arm, hand, or occasionally foot (if we cannot use an arm vein). We then inject the tracer. If you are having a brain or body scan we will ask you to relax quietly for 30-90 minutes before we take you to the scanner room.

We will ask you to lie on the scanner bed and we will make you as comfortable as we can. You will need to keep very still during the scan. It is important that you do not move, or the pictures could be blurred and the scan may have to be repeated. Once you are positioned correctly, the scanner bed will move gently and slide you into the centre of the scanner until you are correctly positioned.

Will you feel anything?

The scan should be completely painless. The most difficult part is keeping still. Make sure you are as comfortable as possible before we start and try to relax.

Passing the time

You will be able to read or listen to music while you are relaxing quietly before your scan (unless you are having a brain scan). Once you are in the scanner we can play music for you via the internet or you may bring your own iPod, MP3 player or smartphone.

What side effects are there?

Your scan involves injecting you with a radioactive tracer, which will only remain in your body for a few hours. This gives you a small amount of radiation. Any small risk from the radiation is outweighed by the benefits of having the scan to help in your diagnosis and treatment. There are no significant side effects. Sometimes when doing body or heart scans we may need to give you other drugs and, if this is the case, we will discuss the possible, minor side effects with you.

When will your results be available?

We will send the results to the doctor who requested the scan, usually within 48 hours of the scan being done. If results are needed more urgently, your doctor can ask us to email them. If you have a further appointment with your doctor please let us know the date when you attend for your scan.

Your scan is at:

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Please check your appointment letter to make sure you come to the correct scanning site.

Contact us

If you have any questions about your PET-CT scan, please contact us, **t:** 020 7188 4988, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, or visit **w:** www.sthpetcentre.org.uk

For more information leaflets on conditions, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

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