

Diagnostic Imaging in Nuclear Medicine

Nuclear Medicine Department



Patient information leaflet

This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions you may have about your visit to the Nuclear Medicine department.

What is Nuclear Medicine?

Nuclear Medicine is a medical speciality that uses radioactivity for diagnosis and treatment of a range of diseases. A radioactive substance is administered into your body. This travels to the area we wish to examine or treat and a special camera (called a gamma camera) is then used to take images of the inside of your body.

Are there any alternative procedures?

Nuclear Medicine imaging provides unique information that often cannot be obtained using other imaging techniques. Any alternative procedures should have been discussed with your doctor prior to receiving this appointment.

How is the radioactivity administered?

Usually, the radioactivity is injected into a vein in your arm. This is through a needle similar to that used for a blood test. Sometimes the radioactivity can be inhaled as a gas, swallowed as a capsule, consumed as a liquid or injected under the skin. The type of procedure you have been referred for will determine the method of administration. You can telephone us if you need further information about this. The telephone number is at the back of this leaflet.

What is involved in a diagnostic scan?

After the radioactivity is administered, a gamma camera is used to take images. The length of time you have to wait before having your scan will depend upon the type of scan you have been referred for. Your appointment letter will inform you of this.

For the images you are required to lie still for a short period of time (typically 20-40 minutes). Occasionally you will be asked to sit or stand. Most tests do not require you to change into a hospital gown but you may be asked to remove jewellery such as a necklace.

During the scan the cameras will come in close to you to take the best images possible. The cameras will not touch you and you will not go through a tunnel. A member of the imaging team will be available to reassure you if you have concerns about the closeness of the cameras. A picture of one of the department's cameras is below.



Do I need to prepare for the scan?

Your appointment letter will inform you of any specific preparation required for the scan. Please make sure you read the appointment letter carefully.

Are there any side effects?

There are no side effects from the radiation and you will be able to drive home once the procedure has been completed.

Are there any risks from the radiation?

The amount of radioactivity you will receive is small and the radiation doses received is similar to that received from an X-Ray exam.

These procedures use ionising radiation to form images of your body and provide your doctor with other clinical information. Ionising radiation can cause cell damage that may, after many years and decades, turn cancerous. We are all at risk of developing cancer during our lifetime. The normal risk is that this will happen to about 50% of people at some point in their life. Undergoing this exam will add only a very small chance of this happening to you.

You are receiving a Nuclear Medicine scan because your doctor has decided that the benefits of having the scan far outweigh the risks of the radiation. There is no risk to other members of your family.

Is there anything I need to tell the staff?

Please tell the staff in Nuclear Medicine if you are **breast feeding** or if there is any chance you could be **pregnant**. Please tell them **before you receive the radioactive substance**.

Can I bring anyone with me?

You are welcome to bring someone with you, but please try to avoid bringing young children or pregnant women.

When will my results be ready?

The doctor who referred you will usually have the scan report within one week.

The radiographers who perform the scan are not permitted to report or comment on your investigation. Therefore we would be grateful if you would refrain from asking them to do so.

Where is Nuclear Medicine?

Nuclear Medicine can be found in the St Luke's Wing of the hospital on Level A. The department can be accessed in one of the following ways:

- **From the St Luke's Wing front entrance (off Gill Avenue).**
Turn immediately to the right and go down the stairs or lift to Level A. Follow the signs directing you to Nuclear Medicine.
- **From the St Luke's Wing back entrance (off Egerton Road).**
Go straight ahead through the St Luke's Cancer Reception area. At the end of the corridor, turn left and follow the signs to Nuclear Medicine.
- **From the Royal Surrey main hospital entrance (off Gill Avenue).**
Go straight ahead through the main entrance hall. At the end, turn left and follow the signs to the St Luke's Wing. Go past Pharmacy (on the right). Carry on until you reach a T-junction. Turn right here and walk along the corridor until you come to a turning on the left (almost opposite the stairs and lifts on the right). Follow this corridor until you come to a set of stairs and lift (on the left). Take either the stairs or lift to Level A. Follow the signs from here to Nuclear Medicine.

Research

Your images and data are kept confidential and stored and used in accordance with the data protection act. From time to time we use images for audits or research to help improve the clinical service we provide. Please be assured that before data can be used for these purposes, any information that could be used to identify you is removed. If you do not want your images being used in this way then let us know.

Travelling to the hospital

Arriving by car

The main car park is situated at the front of the hospital, accessed from Gill Avenue. This is for all patients and visitors.

There is also a patient car park at the back of the hospital near the St Luke's Wing. This is for cancer patients only (usually those receiving chemotherapy or radiotherapy). This can be accessed from Egerton Road. Please note that the car park is always full.

Like most other hospitals, the Royal Surrey needs to make a charge for car parking, but there is a free 20 minute pickup and drop off point at the front of the hospital and parking provisions for disabled people are available next to all entrances.

On arriving and parking, visitors/patients now have 3 payment options:

- Option 1 – Check in/Check out (pay by card)
- Option 2 – Pay and display (pay by cash or card)
- Option 3 – Pay by mobile app (using the 'Waytopark' app)

Please note that there are car parking signs providing full instructions if required.

Any enquiries or queries about parking should be directed to the CP Plus parking office which is located in the main entrance of the hospital. Alternatively you can call **01483 551122** (ext **6962**).

Arriving by motorcycle or bicycle

There are covered stands and secure storage for bicycles and motorcycles at the front and rear of the hospital

Arriving by public transport

Rail

There is a frequent train service from many of the surrounding areas to Guildford train station. The station is also on the main line between London Waterloo and Portsmouth, with Reading and Dorking connections. A fast, frequent service is available with trains running approximately every 20 minutes. For further information please contact the 24 hour Passenger Information line on **03457 48 49 50** or search 'National Rail' online.

From the train station it is possible to travel to the hospital by either bus or taxi.

Bus

Safeguard Buses has services that come to the hospital from the town centre via the train station departing roughly every 10 minutes. You will need to catch route 5 to the hospital and route 4 back to Guildford town centre. The buses run at different frequencies at weekends and public bank holidays

For further information and advice

We want to make your visit to us as worry free as possible. If you require any further advice, or if you have any more questions, please contact us on:

01483 406701 (Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am and 5pm).

Alternatively you can leave a message on the answerphone and we will respond as soon as possible.

Further information sources

- <https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=gennuclear>
(General Nuclear Medicine Information)
- www.royalsurrey.nhs.uk/patients/getting-here/

Contact details

Royal Surrey County Hospital

Telephone: 01483 571122 (switchboard)

Nuclear Medicine Department

Telephone: 01483 406701

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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Author: Jamie Grey

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