

PET-CT Scan

What is a PET-CT scan?

A PET-CT scan is a **Positron Emission Tomography** test that produces pictures of the whole body not seen by routine x-rays, CAT or MRI scans. A PET-CT scan is sometimes called a “PET scan” for short. The PET images are combined with a CT scan to improve the quality of the test.

This test involves a small injection of radioactive glucose (sugar) into the vein. The pictures created by the scanner show where the glucose is being used in the body. Cancer cells often use up more glucose than normal cells. The images created by the scan help your doctors to discover possible sites of cancer.



How do you prepare for the test?

- Drink 4 cups (32 ounces) of water the day before the test.
- Do not eat or drink (except water) for at least 6 hours before the test. This also includes gum, mints and lozenges.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine or alcohol for at least 12 hours before the test.
- Some medicines, such as metformin, may interfere with the test. Discuss your medicines with your healthcare team.
- If you are diabetic and require insulin or oral medicines, the nurse at the PET center will advise you regarding the time you should stop eating. The testing lab will check your glucose (sugar) level. If this level is normal, you will continue with the test. High glucose levels can affect the PET scan result. If your blood sugar is too high your test may be rescheduled.
- If you have been advised not to take your medicines on an empty stomach, you may eat a few saltine crackers with your medicine.
- Avoid strenuous exercise for at least one day prior to the PET scan.
- Wear loose fitting, warm, comfortable clothing with as little metal as possible.
- Do not wear jewelry.
- Remove hearing aids or dental appliances that contain metal.
- Bring your prescription for the exam with you, along with any referrals or authorization paperwork required by your insurance company.
- Bring any films/discs (such as prior CAT scans, MRI images and/or PET scans) to the testing facility.
- If for any reason you are unable to keep your appointment, please call the imaging center as soon as possible to cancel or reschedule.

How is a PET scan done?

- Before the PET scan, you will have a small needle placed in your arm. You will receive an injection of a small amount of a radioactive sugar (not a dye) through the needle in your arm. After the injection, you will wait approximately 40-60 minutes for the radioactive sugar to move from your bloodstream into your cells. Then, the needle will be removed from your vein and you will be asked to empty your bladder before being taken into the PET scan room. You will lie flat on your back on a table that moves slowly through a large ring shaped opening. The scanner is not enclosed. You will be asked to lie very still during the PET scan because even small movements can interfere with the results. The procedure will take approximately 1 hour, but please plan to be at the PET center for 3 hours.

If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.