NHS
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Having a kidney function test as an outpatient

A kidney function test, otherwise known as Glomerular Filtration Rate test (or GFR), is generally considered to be the best way of assessing kidney function. The test is often used before, and sometimes during, chemotherapy sessions to monitor kidney function. It is very important to know the level of kidney function before prescribing some chemotherapy drugs.

Is it safe for me to have the scan?

For this test it is necessary to inject a small amount of radioactive tracer, called a radio-pharmaceutical. The small risk from this radiation dose is outweighed by the information that will be gained by having the test. There is a table attached to the end of this leaflet which shows some common radiation exposures to put this into context. Ask if you want any more information. All investigations are vetted to make sure this is the appropriate test for you. If you don't understand why you need to have this test, please speak to the doctor who referred you.

Before the test

The GFR test is carried out in the Medical Physics Department, which is near to the Berkshire Cancer Centre. The closest car park is the one at the London Road entrance. The test takes approximately four to five hours, but you do not have to stay in the department for that time. There is no preparation required and you can eat and drink normally on the morning of your appointment.

What happens during the test?

When you arrive in the department you will be given a radioactive injection into a vein in your arm or hand.

After this, there will be a two-hour gap. You will be asked to return to the department for a blood test at two, three and four hours after the injection. The time in between the injection and blood tests can be spent as you please and you are not required to stay in the hospital. We ask that if you drink caffeinated drinks such as coffee, to drink your usual amount and not to drink an excessive amount (more than your usual) during the test, as too much may interfere with your test. You are allowed to drink other liquids as normal and eat too.

After your test

It is very unlikely that you will feel any side-effects, but if you think that you have please let the Medical Physics Department know. You may continue all your normal activities unless you have been advised otherwise. After your test there will be some radioactivity left in your body but this will not present a significant risk to other people around you. The radioactivity in your body will

soon disappear, but if you continue to drink plenty of liquids this will help clear the radioactivity more quickly.

The results

The results of this test will be sent to your consultant before they are able to prescribe your chemotherapy if this is why the test is being done. Your clinician will discuss what your test results mean.

Contacting us

Medical Physics Department, Level 1 North Block, Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00pm.
If you have any questions about your treatment, please ask the staff looking after you or telephone 0118 322 7355 or email: rbb-tr.physics@nhs.net

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Physics & Clinical Engineering Department, January 2024. Next review due: January 2026

The table below is a simple guide to the levels of radiation risks for various examinations. These are measured in millisieverts (mSv).

Source of exposure (using RBFT local diagnostic reference levels (DRLs) for Nuclear Medicine)	**Dose**
Having a chest x-ray	0.014 mSv
Taking a transatlantic flight	0.08 mSv
GFR test with Tc-99m DTPA	**0.05 mSv**
UK average annual radiation dose	**2.7 mSv**
CT scan of the chest – CT scan of whole spine	6.6 mSv – 10 mSv