



Having a gastric emptying study as an outpatient

A gastric emptying study is a nuclear medicine procedure using radiation to measure the speed with which food empties from the stomach and enters the small intestine.

Is it safe for me to have the scan?

You will be fed some porridge which has been mixed with a radiopharmaceutical, in order to take the pictures. The small risk from this radiation dose is outweighed by the information that will be gained by having the scan. There is a table showing various radiation risks at the end of this leaflet. 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 scan please speak to the doctor who referred you.

For female patients

If you know that you are pregnant, or there is any chance that you may be pregnant, then please contact the department where you will be having the scan. **Do this as soon as possible as the scan can be postponed if it is not urgent. Also, please contact the department if you are breastfeeding**, as we may give you special instructions.

Preparation for your scan

You must have nothing to eat or drink from midnight except water only. If you smoke you must not do so for four hours before this test.

Your scan

You will be spoon fed a meal of porridge which will contain a small amount of radioactivity while sitting on a chair in front of a camera. The porridge will not taste any different to normal porridge and you will not feel different after eating it. Pictures will be taken as you are being fed and further pictures will be taken for at least one hour. In some cases, pictures may take up to three hours. You will not need to get undressed for this test.

After your scan

It is very unlikely that you will feel any side effects after the scan, but if you think that you have please let someone from the Medical Physics Department know.

You may continue all your normal activities unless you have been advised otherwise. After your scan 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.

Your results

Your gastric emptying scan will be looked at by a specialist doctor, who will issue a report. The report will be sent to the doctor who requested your scan rather than to your GP. This is because the doctor who requested your scan will have all the results from other tests and will be able to tell you how the result of your scan affects your care.

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, April 2024.

Next review due: April 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 |
| Gastric emptying study | 0.9 mSv |
| UK average annual radiation dose | 2.7 mSv |
| CT scan of the chest – CT scan of whole spine | 6.6 mSv – 10 mSv |