

What is a PET/CT Scan?

Positron Emission Tomography /Computed Tomography, or PET/CT, is a dedicated scanner which incorporates both PET and CT technology into a single unit. PET/CT is a whole body scan that can effectively detect and evaluate many types of cancer earlier and more accurately than any other imaging tests. PET/CT is also helpful in diagnosing certain neurological conditions such as uncontrollable seizures or Alzheimer's disease.



Performing PET and CT with one scanner produces perfectly superimposed images so that metabolic abnormalities seen on PET can be precisely localized to a specific anatomic structure shown on CT. Such distinctions can make all the difference in arriving at a correct diagnosis.

What does the PET/CT scan entail?

The first part involves an injection of a small amount of a positron-emitting form of glucose. Glucose is a sugar every cell in your body needs in order to function. You will relax comfortably in a room for approximately one hour while the radioactive sugar circulates and localizes throughout your body. You will then proceed with the PET/CT scan.

The scan lasts about 20 to 25 minutes and involves lying on a table which passes through the scanner. After the scan you are ready to leave the clinic. Your appointment will take approximately 2 hours.

May I eat or drink before my scan?

Typically, you will be asked not to eat anything 6 hours before the scan (unless you are diabetic and on insulin). Drink plenty of water before, during and after the exam, as well as the day of the exam until you arrive for your appointment. After the exam, please continue to drink water.

It is important to follow these specific instructions. When we call to confirm your appointment, our staff will go over the prep with you and answer any of your questions.

Is the PET/CT scan safe?

Yes, the glucose tracer is short-lived and out of your system very quickly. The radiation exposure is similar to conventional imaging. If your doctor orders additional diagnostic CT scans with IV and oral contrast, we will want to get additional information from you regarding allergies to iodine contrast or kidney problems, etc.

How will I feel after the scan?

You should feel fine as there are no known side effects from the injected glucose tracer. You can resume normal activity as soon as you are finished with the exam and you may drive yourself home.

What are the benefits of PET/CT scanning vs. other imaging?

- PET/CT often identifies disease sooner and with more accuracy
- PET looks at the metabolic information of your cells and tissue; CT scans look at the anatomy and structure

- PET/CT can help determine if a tumor is cancerous or benign; and also detects and differentiates a tumor from scarring caused by surgery or radiation treatment
- PET/CT scans can reduce, replace, or eliminate multiple imaging exams, and may help avoid invasive or unnecessary procedures
- Disease is detected, staged, and re-staged with greater certainty and confidence
- Increased diagnostic precision helps insure optimal treatments and outcomes for our patients

When will I receive the results from my scan?

The images will be interpreted by one of our experienced PET/CT radiologists and your physician will receive a written report. Your physician will then share the results with you.

What should I do to prepare?

Allow yourself plenty of time to arrive for your appointment. If you are not in a rush the image quality can actually be better due to less glucose uptake in the muscle.

- Avoid anything with caffeine, sugar and alcohol for 24 hours prior to the exam and avoid any strenuous exercise.
- Please DO NOT eat or drink anything (except water) beginning 6 hours before your appointment (unless diabetic and on insulin).
- If you are diabetic, please adhere to your normal regimen to try to ensure a normal blood sugar range. A high blood glucose level will decrease the accuracy of the PET/CT scan.
- DO drink plenty of water before, up to, and after your scan, unless restricted by your doctor.
- Unless instructed otherwise, take your normally prescribed medication the day of the scan.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing with no metal.
- Tell your doctor and the PET/CT technologist if you are diabetic, pregnant, or think you might be pregnant.

It is very important to follow the PET/CT preparation to obtain the most accurate results for you and your physician. If you have not been reached prior to the exam date, please call Radiology Associates to confirm your appointment between 7:30am and 4:00pm.