

TENNESSEE ONCOLOGY

Frequently Asked Questions For P.E.T. scans

What is PET?

PET is an acronym for **Positron Emission Tomography**. PET uses radiation or nuclear medicine imaging to produce 3-dimensional color images of the functional processes within the human body. A Computed Tomography (CT) scan shows the structure. Merging these two scans into one highly sophisticated PET/CT imaging technique provides detailed information about presence or spread of disease and accurately identifies its precise location.

How does PET work?

Radioactive glucose (sugar) called a radiotracer is injected into the vein of your arm. The tracer travels through the body and is absorbed by the organs and tissues being studied. The energy given off by the tracer substance is converted into 3-dimensional pictures.

How is a PET scan different from a CT or MRI scan?

A PET scan reveals energy changes at a cellular level. This allows detection of small cancers, differentiates between benign and malignant tumors, and allows accurate staging. CT or MRI detects structural organ or tissue changes that occur later with more progressed disease. .

How long does the test take?

After injected into the vein, it typically takes about 1 hour for the radiotracer to travel throughout the body and be absorbed into the organs or tissues being examined. The scan itself may take another 20-45 minutes. You will be asked to remain still for the length of the exam.

What are the risks associated with a PET scan?

Although a radiotracer chemical is used, the radiation exposure is low. Pregnant and lactating women should discuss the risk compared with the need for and potential information to be gained with their physician.

How do I prepare for a PET Scan?

- Do not eat or drink 6 hours prior to your exam.
- Take regular medications with water, except diabetic medications.
- **Oral diabetic medications cannot be taken within six hours of your scan.** Insulin should NOT be injected within 4 hours of the scan. Blood glucose should be less than 200 before the injection of radioactive glucose. For glucose levels above 200, please contact our PET facility prior to your appointment time.
- Discuss with your physician if you anticipate experiencing anxiety or claustrophobia. A mild sedative may be prescribed for you to bring with you to your appointment. If so, plan to have someone drive you home.
- Wear comfortable clothes.
- Expect the procedure to last a total of 2-3 hours.
- Provide 24 hour advance notice to reschedule.

What happens after the PET scan?

Eat as normal and drink plenty of fluids after your study is completed. You should not experience any side effects from the study.

When will I receive results of the PET scan?

Scan results will be sent to your referring physician. Your physician will follow up to discuss your results.