

Breast Sentinel Lymph Node

injection and scan

Patient Information Sheet

The sentinel lymph node is the first node that drains the breast and the tumour. To identify the sentinel lymph node we inject a slightly radioactive tracer into the breast tissue before surgery. A scan may be performed 2 hours later if required.

Your surgeon will use a probe that detects the radioactive tracer in surgery to find the lymph nodes to remove.

You have been given one (sometimes two) appointment times;

- **On the first appointment**, you will be given an injection of a radioactive tracer into the breast tissue.
- **If you have a second appointment**, you will have a scan of your chest to show where the radioactive tracer has drained to in your lymph system. We will use a gamma camera and CT scanner (using x-rays).

Preparation

There is no preparation necessary for this appointment.

If possible, please come to your appointment alone as we can only accommodate a small number of people in our waiting room.

Are there any risks from the radioactive tracer?

The radioactive tracer is used as sparingly as possible and the benefits of this injection far outweigh the small risk from radiation.

- The radiation dose you will receive from the injection is similar to the radiation received from natural sources in **12 days**.
- If you also have a scan, this will be equivalent to the radiation received from natural sources in **1 year**. Drinking plenty of fluids and emptying your bladder regularly will help to remove the radiation.

There are no restrictions for spending time with others after your injection.

You should use the toilet sitting down for **24 hours** to avoid splashes as your urine will be slightly radioactive.

Breastfeeding

Let us know in advance if you may be breastfeeding. This is important because of the small risk of childhood cancer from the radiation that we use.

How is the procedure performed?

Injection

- You will be asked to remove any clothes from the waist up and put on a gown.
- You will then lie on a bed where you will be given an injection in the affected breast.

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- The injection contains a small amount of radioactive tracer. The liquid travels through the breast tissue and is taken up in the sentinel lymph node.
 - Once the injection is done you may get dressed again.

Scan

Some patients may also have scan performed in the department. This is to show where the tracer has been absorbed but this information is not always necessary.

- If you need a scan you will have two appointments and be asked to come back later in the day.
- We will use a gamma camera going around your chest which takes 15 minutes, followed by a CT scan using x-rays.

After your injection

Travelling after your scan

Some major event/ transport venues have very sensitive radiation detectors. These detectors could be triggered by the small amount of radioactivity remaining in your body on the days following your scan. If you're planning to travel within **7 days** following your scan, we recommend that you carry your appointment letter with you.

Information for other hospitals or care homes

Within the 4 days following your scan:

If you are admitted to a care home or hospital (other than the RUH), or if you are cared for by a healthcare worker in your home, please ask them to contact the RUH Clinical Imaging and Measurement Department. Their employer might need to register with the Health and Safety Executive to show that their staff are aware of the small amount of radioactivity that is present for a few days after your scan.

Additional information

The radioactive tracer is prepared from human serum albumin derived from human blood donations tested according to EEC regulations.

If you have any concerns or question about your procedure, or you need this information in another format such as larger print, please contact the telephone numbers below:

Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist: 01225 82 4057

Clinical Imaging and Measurement: 01225 82 6630

If you have any concerns or questions about your scan, or you need this information in another format such as larger print, please telephone.

Clinical Imaging and Measurement Department
Zone B, Department B58
Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG
01225 82 6630 | www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Support and Complaints Team (PSCT/ known previously as PALS) if you would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email: ruh-tr.psct@nhs.net or telephone: **01225 82 5656**.

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