

Having a Gallium Scan



A gallium scan is an imaging test. It's done to look for inflammation, infection, or cancer in your body. It's a type of nuclear medicine scan that uses a radioactive material called gallium.

What to tell your healthcare provider

Tell your healthcare provider about any recent illnesses, any health conditions, and all medicines you take. This includes prescription medicines and over-the-counter medicines, such as ibuprofen and aspirin. It also includes illegal drugs, vitamins, herbs, and other supplements. And tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have taken any medicine that contains bismuth
- Have had any recent medical tests that use barium, such as a barium swallow exam or CT scan
- Are sensitive or allergic to any medicines
- Are pregnant or think you may be pregnant
- Are breastfeeding

Getting ready for your procedure

Talk with your healthcare provider about how to get ready for your procedure. They will let you know if you need to make any changes to your normal medicines, diet, or activities. You might need to take a laxative for several nights before your scheduled scan. You also might need to have an enema about 2 hours before your exam. It may help to get a better image.

Getting the injection

You will have an injection of gallium citrate hours or days before your scan. The injection will be done in the nuclear medicine department at a scheduled time. You will likely get the injection in a vein in your arm. It may sting a little. You can then go home and resume your normal activities. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any reactions to the injection, such as redness, warmth, or swelling at the injection site, or nausea that lasts.

On the day of your scan

Carefully follow your healthcare provider's instructions about when to return for the gallium scan. It may be several hours to a few days later. You need to have your scan at exactly the right time. Don't miss it unless there is an emergency. If you need to miss your scan, reschedule it as soon as possible.

In general, you may expect the following during your scan:

- You'll need to empty your bladder first. You will also need to remove any metal jewelry or objects.
- The scanning machine may look like a firm bed with an overhead camera. Your healthcare provider will position you beneath this camera.
- The scan is painless. As you lie on your back, the scanner will move above you. It will take pictures over the length of your body.
- You'll need to lie very still during the scan. The scan may last about an hour. Staying still will help create a clear picture.

After your procedure

You can likely go home the same day and resume your normal activities. The gallium will leave your body over the next several days. Your healthcare provider may give you more instructions if needed.

Follow-up care

A healthcare provider who specializes in reading these scans will view the images. The results will be sent to your primary healthcare provider. The results of your scan will help your healthcare provider create a treatment plan for you. You may need another scan to see how your treatment has worked. Make sure to keep all your follow-up appointments.

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