Lymphoscintigraphy for Melanoma

About your scan

Read this handout to learn how lymphoscintigraphy for melanoma works, how it is done, what to expect during the scan, and how to get your results.

What is lymphoscintigraphy?

*Lymphoscintigraphy* is a scan that identifies the first lymph node that the melanoma site drains to. This is called a sentinel lymph node. To find this node, a radioactive material (*tracer*) is injected near the melanoma site. The tracer flows from the injection site into the nearest lymph node, the sentinel node.

Lymphoscintigraphy for melanoma is done before surgery to identify the first lymph node that the affected area drains into. In surgery, your surgeon will remove this lymph node to see if any of the tumor cells have metastasized (spread) to it.

How do I prepare?

You will need to apply EMLA cream (cream that contains 2.5% lidocaine and 2.5% prilocaine) to the area at least 1 hour before your scan. This will numb the area.

You should receive a prescription for the EMLA cream from your surgeon.

What can I expect?

You will check in at the Pavilion Surgery Center before your scan. You will change into a hospital gown, then a staff person will take you to the Radiology (Imaging Services) department.

How is the scan done?

- A nuclear medicine doctor will clean your skin with *betadine* (a skin cleanser that contains iodine).
- This doctor will give you up to 4 injections of the radioactive tracer around the melanoma. Your lymph nodes around the melanoma will take up the tracer, usually within minutes. The area may be gently massaged to help improve the lymph flow.
• Flow of the tracer will be watched by a gamma camera that hovers above you. Nuclear Medicine images will then be taken. When the sentinel node is found, the doctor will use a surgical pen to mark on your skin where that node is.

How will I feel before and during the scan?
You may feel some discomfort from the injections. You may be asked to change positions as the images are taken.

After the Scan
There are no special instructions to follow after the scan.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?
A radiologist or nuclear medicine doctor will read your scans. The doctor will also review the other scan results that you may have brought with you. The doctor who referred you for this scan will talk with you about the results.

A gamma camera will hover above you during your scan.