

Nuclear Medicine

Information for Prison Officers Accompanying Patients for Diagnostic Investigations

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE NUCLEAR MEDICINE DEPARTMENT?

The prisoner you are accompanying requires a Nuclear Medicine scan. This will involve them being injected with a small amount of a radioactive tracer to allow us to take pictures of them with our special cameras. It will be necessary to release the patient from any form of restraint during the scan to allow the camera to get close to the patient. For your own safety, it will also be necessary to release the patient if they are having a cardiac stress test as there is a very small risk that they may need to be shocked with a defibrillator. If you need permission to do this, please try to arrange this in advance. Once they have been injected, the patient will become radioactive and will stay radioactive until all the tracer decays away or is passed out in urine. This generally happens within 24 hours.

WHAT EFFECT DOES THE RADIATION HAVE?

We use a very small amount of radioactivity for our procedures so that the risk to the patient and those around them is kept as low as possible. It has no side effects for the patient and will not cause nausea or drowsiness. People close to the patient will, however, receive a small radiation dose.

DO I NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THE RADIATION DOSE I WILL RECEIVE?

We have measured the dose that people close to our patients receive and it is well below the legal limit. The risk to you will be very low. Because you will be closer to the patient than most of the people who accompany our patients, your dose will be slightly higher but will still not pass the limit. There are a few things you can do to reduce the dose still further.

HOW CAN I REDUCE THE DOSE I RECEIVE?

Our usual advice to people to reduce the dose they receive is to keep a reasonable distance from patients and not to spend too long in close contact with them. This is obviously more difficult in your case but please bear this in mind. Moving your chairs a few inches apart in our waiting area will help. On the return journey to the prison, please try to keep your distance from the patient as much as possible. Please remember that the dose you are likely to receive and the risk to you is very low.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I RETURN TO THE PRISON?

No special precautions are needed for the prisoner and they can return to their normal routine.