



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Sentinel node scan (breast)

Imaging

Patient information

What is this information about?

This information is about your sentinel node scan.

Why have I been given this information?

You have been given this information because your doctor has referred (sent) you for a sentinel node scan.

Reading this information can help you to know what to expect from your scan. Following the advice will help to make sure that the scan goes as well as it can.

What is Nuclear Medicine?

Nuclear medicine:

- is a safe and painless technique which provides medical images of the body.
- uses small amounts of radioactive materials as tracers to diagnose or treat disease. In diagnosing a condition, the radiation is detected by a special type of camera called a 'Gamma camera'.

What is a sentinel node scan?

To prepare for your breast surgery, the surgeon needs to identify which lymph nodes to remove from your armpit (axilla).

A 'sentinal' node is the first lymph node that cancer cells are most likely to spread to.

A sentinel node scan is usually done on the day before your surgery. Sometimes it may be done on the same day as your operation.

Be aware

this scan is not the same as having a blue dye injection.

What can I expect during my appointment?

- We will give you an injection of a radioactive tracer under the skin of your breast.
- The tracer is then slowly taken up into the axilla lymph glands.
- The radioactivity lasts long enough so that the surgeon can detect it using a small probe in theatre during your operation.
- While you are having the scan you must lie as still as you can on a 'table' while a camera moves over your body. The camera will not touch you and you will not be in a 'tunnel'.

Where should I go for my scan?

You will have your scan in the Nuclear Medicine Department, St Richard's Hospital.

Use the main entrance to the Outpatients Department. This is in the South Wing of the hospital.

Once you are inside the Outpatients Department, turn right and take the stairs or lift to the Department of Nuclear Medicine on the first floor.

Wheelchairs are available just inside the entrance on the ground floor.

If you are arriving by car, please use hospital entrance number 2.

If you need to park, use the 'pay on foot' car park close to the entrance to the Outpatients department (South car park). Pay at the end of your parking session using the machines in the Outpatients department entrance. Disabled parking bays are available for the registered disabled near the main Outpatients' entrance.

How can I prepare for my sentinel node scan?

- **Eating and drinking.** You can eat and drink as usual before the scan appointment.
- **Medications.** You **do not** need to stop any medication for a sentinel node scan.

Might I have an allergic reaction to the radioactive injection?

The radiotracer we use is prepared from human albumin. Please inform staff if you are hypersensitive to this product. Allergic reactions to the radiotracer are very rare but can happen.

Can I have a sentinel node scan if I am pregnant?

We will check your pregnancy status with you before the scan. If you are, or think you may be, pregnant you must tell us as soon as possible.

Will I need to undress for my scan?

We recommend that you wear comfortable, loose clothing. You will need to undress to the waist, and we will provide you with a gown for the procedure.

What should I do if I cannot come to my appointment?

You must let us know as soon as possible if you are unable to attend.

How long will the scan take?

Sentinel node scans can usually take up to 30 minutes. We may need to do further scans if the lymphatic drainage is very slow.

Who will be at my scan?

A radiographer or an assistant practitioner will be with you in the room during the scan.

There are students training in the scanning department.

A qualified radiographer will supervise them if they do your scan.

Please tell us if you would prefer not to have a trainee at your scan.

Are there any risks?

We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day.

This comes from the ground, building materials around us, the food we eat and from the sun.

This scan will give you a small extra radiation dose on top of this.

The amount depends on the type of scan you are having. It ranges from a few days' natural background radiation to a few years.

After weighing up the risks and benefits your doctor has decided that having the scan is right for you. They believe that the potential benefits outweigh the risk.

The radiation dose for the scan is listed in the table below, along with a comparison of radiation doses from other sources of radiation.

The only effect known at these low doses is a very small increase in the chance that you might get cancer many years or even decades after the exposure.

The additional cancer risks from these different sources of radiation are shown in the table below.

These risk levels are a very small addition to the 1 in 2 chance we all have of getting cancer at some point during our lifetime.

Radiation source	Radiation dose	Lifetime additional risk of cancer per examination	Risk
Chest X-ray	0.014 mSv	1 in 1,350,000	Minimal
Transatlantic flight	0.08 mSv	1 in 250,000	Minimal
UK average annual radiation dose	2.7 mSv	1 in 7,500	Low
Sentinel Node Scan (Breast)	0.08 mSv	1 in 250,000	Minimal
Chest CT	6.2 mSv	1 in 3,200	Low

Can I drive home after my scan?

Yes.

When will I get my scan results?

The results will be sent to the surgeon before your operation.

Can I bring someone else with me to my appointment?

Yes. You can bring someone, such as a friend, relative or carer with you. They must be over the age of 16 .

Be aware,

you may not bring children under the age of 16 or pregnant people with you to your appointment. There is no child-minding service at the Trust. You must make your own arrangements for childcare while you are having your appointment if you need to.

To protect other people from radiation, after you have had your radiotracer injection, plan to keep a distance of at least 1 meter from them until the end of the day. For further advice please contact the Nuclear Medicine Department.

How is my medical data protected?

Everyone working within the NHS has a legal duty to keep patient information about you confidential and secure. If you have any concerns around the use of your medical and diagnostic imaging information, copies of the 'Care Record Guarantee' and 'Your Medical Data' leaflets can be downloaded from: **UHSx** www.uhsussex.nhs.uk

You can get a printed copy of these leaflets from the PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison) office at Worthing or St Richard's, Chichester, Hospitals.

Who can I contact if I need further information or support after I have read this information?

For further general information on Nuclear Medicine and Sentinel Node scans visit the: **British Nuclear Medicine Society website** www.bnms.org.uk

If you have questions or need further information about your sentinel node scan appointment, please contact the Nuclear Medicine Department (staffed Monday to Friday):

Nuclear Medicine Department,

St Richard's Hospital, First floor, Outpatients block (South Wing)
01243 831456
uhsussex.nuclearmedicine.nhs.net

I need help with transport to my appointment for medical or financial reasons. What help is available?

To find out what help with transport you may be able to get please visit the **UHSx Patient Transport** website www.uhsussex.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-transport

To enquire about booking the hospital transport service phone **Hospital transport 0300 777 4444**

To check whether you can get help with the cost of transport, phone the St Richard's Hospital switchboard and ask for the Cashiers Office.

St Richard's Hospital switchboard 01243 788122

Be aware, you should do this before your appointment.

**Today's research is tomorrow's treatments.
That's why UHSx is proud to be a research-active Trust.**

Find out how you can get involved. Visit our website www.uhsussex.nhs.uk/research-and-innovation/information-for-patients-and-public or scan the QR code



This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in St Richard's Hospital.

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