

# What is a PET (Positron Emission Tomography) Scan?

*"You're going to go in and out of the machine for the pictures."*

Positron emission tomography, or PET, is a scan that uses a small amount of radioactive material, a special camera, and a computer to take pictures inside your body.

*"PET scans are frequently used for two reasons. The most common reason is to diagnose cancer, or to evaluate cancer. They help us to see tumors, and to see if tumors are responding to treatment."*-Dr. Aaron Hattaway, MD, Radiologist

You'll need to eat a special high-protein, no-carb diet for two days before the test. That means no sugar, breads, or alcohol. This diet will help the tracer material used in the test travel through your body. The tracer helps distinguish between healthy tissue and unhealthy tissue.

*"The tracer will be given through an IV in your vein, which will circulate for about an hour. It does contain radioactive material, which is safe and will leave the body within a day."*-Jessica Levi, Technologist

Starting 6 hours before the test, don't eat or drink anything. If you have diabetes, you'll get special instructions on how to prepare. Also, let your provider know if you're pregnant or breastfeeding, which might affect your ability to have the test. When you arrive, you'll receive the tracer and wait for about an hour while your body absorbs it. Then you'll lie on a table that slides into the opening of the PET scanner. You will hear some noises as the scan is taken. If you have a fear of tight spaces, ask about taking a sedative before the test to help relax you. In another room the images being taken will appear on a computer screen.

*"You did great."*

The whole scan takes 20 to 45 minutes. After that you can leave. For a day after the test, drink a lot of water. The extra fluid will help flush the tracer from your body.

*"If your results are normal, you may not need to do anything else, but if the test picks up a problem, you may need additional tests. You should be sure and ask your provider so that they can give you guidance as to additional tests, treatments or any other follow up that you may need."*- Dr. Aaron Hattaway, MD, Radiologist