Hepatobiliary Scan

Your doctor has ordered a hepatobiliary scan that shows liver function and detects:

- Gallstones
- Bile Leak
- Blockages in the flow of bile from the gall bladder to the liver

The test, done in the Nuclear Medicine department, uses a radioactive tracer. The amount of radiation used in this test is small and well within limits that are not harmful. Your total test time is about 3 to 6 hours depending on why the test was ordered, and may involve more than one appointment. You may be asked to return the next day for about 30 minutes.

Before the Test

The night before the test
Do not eat or drink anything after midnight of the night before your test.

12 hours before the test
Do not take any pain medicine 12 hours before the scan.

On the day of the test, please come to the 8th floor reception desk in the Galter Pavilion, 201 East Huron Street, at your scheduled appointment time. Be sure to bring:

- Your doctor’s written order for the test if one was given to you
- A list of all your current medications (prescription, over-the-counter, and herbals)
- Photo ID
- Medical insurance information
- Medicare card (Medicare patients only)

Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from the Feinberg and Galter pavilions.

For discounted rates, please bring your parking ticket with you. Tickets can be validated at the Customer Services Desks on the 1st, 2nd and 8th floors of the Feinberg and Galter pavilions; 1st floor of Prentice (including the Prentice 24-hour desk near the Superior entrance).
During the Test

When you arrive in the Nuclear Medicine department, a nurse or technologist (tech) will ask you questions about your medical history. If you think you might be pregnant or are breastfeeding, please tell the tech before you are given any injection.

You then will be asked to lie on a table while an IV (into the vein) injection of a radioactive tracer is given. The tech then will position the camera over your stomach so pictures can be taken for 1 hour. At the end of the first hour, 2 more pictures will be taken from different angles. A doctor will review your scan and in most cases, will ask for extra images to obtain more detailed information. Additional pictures may be taken at 2, 4, 6 and 24 hours after the injection. At each added time period, 3 pictures may be taken. Every set of pictures will be reviewed by a doctor. The tech will tell you if more pictures are needed and when you are to return to the department.

After the Test

You may resume your normal activities and diet. The injection you were given is not harmful and becomes non-radioactive within hours. Talk with your doctor about your test results. You may obtain a copy of your results from Medical Records. Medical Records is located on the 2nd floor of the Galter Pavilion.

If you have any questions regarding your instructions for this test, please call the Nuclear Medicine department at 312.926.2320, Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 5 pm.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.