Renal Glomerular Filtration Rate (GFR) Scan

About the Test
A renal glomerular filtration rate (GFR) scan is an exam that shows the function and perfusion of your kidneys using a radioactive tracer. The amount of radiation used in this test is small and well within limits that are not harmful. The exam is done in the Nuclear Medicine department and takes about 4 hours.

Before the Test
To prepare for this test:
- Do not have any caffeinated products (such as soda, coffee, tea, or chocolate) after 10 pm the night before the exam.
- Eat a light breakfast, low in protein (such as oatmeal with fruit or a granola bar) 1 hour before your appointment time.
- Drink 32 ounces of clear liquid (such as water, apple juice) 1 hour before your appointment time.
- A urine sample will not be needed for this exam.

On the day of the test, plan to arrive 15 minutes before your test time. Be sure to bring:
- Your doctor’s written order for the test if one was given to you.
- A list of allergies
- A list of your current medications, (prescription, over-the-counter, and herbals)
- Photo ID
- Medical insurance information
- Medicare card (Medicare patients only)

Please come to the 8th floor reception desk in the Galter Pavilion, 201 East Huron Street.

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 and the 1st floor of Prentice (including the Prentice 24-hour desk near the Superior Street entrance).
During the Test

When you arrive in the Nuclear Medicine department, a technologist will place an IV into the vein and collect a blood sample. The technologist will ask you to lie on an imaging table where a radioactive tracer is injected through your IV. A special camera will be used to detect the tracer and take pictures of your kidneys for 6 minutes. The IV is then removed and a 1 minute picture is taken of the arm used to inject you with the tracer. This portion of the test shows how well the left kidney is working when compared to the right kidney.

The technologist will then help you move to a waiting room where you will sit for 1 hour before a second blood sample is collected. After this blood sample, the technologist will give you a 2 hour break.

- You will be allowed to leave the department if you wish to do so.
- Do not eat or drink anything, including water, during this break.
- Return to the Nuclear Medicine department in 2 hours.

When you return, the technologist will collect a third blood sample from you. Remember not to eat or drink anything, including water, until all 3 blood samples have been collected.

After the Test

You may resume your normal activities and diet. The IV tracer you are 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 test results about a week after the exam from Medical Records. Medical Records is located on the 2nd floor of the Galter Pavilion.

If you have any questions about 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.