

"The Weatherhead PET Experience"

What will I experience at the PET scan appointment?

REST/STRESS IMAGING

After you have been checked in for your PET scan appt, you will be interviewed by a registered nurse to confirm your medical history, medications, and recent symptoms. The test will be explained in detail and you will sign a consent form. You will be brought to the PET preparation room to get your IV inserted and monitoring electrodes placed. Once started, the test should take about one hour.

The PET/CT camera is a large donut shaped camera that you will be placed in. You will not be enclosed (like an MRI) but you do have to move through a tunnel for about 2 minutes as we position you. Once in position, your head and arms will be outside the tunnel. You will be able to see the room and the people around you. If you think you are too claustrophobic to get through this, please ask your physician for a sedative medication to take before your scan.

We will inject a radioactive tracer to take the pictures of your heart muscle at rest and after a "chemical stress". We do not use CONTRAST material to take the pictures so don't worry about contrast allergies. You will not feel the radioactive tracer being injected to take the pictures but you may have symptoms with the stress medication. The stress medication brings lots of blood to the heart so it is a normal reaction to feel chest fullness and a flushed feeling. If you regularly have chest pain with physical activity, the stress drug may bring that on, so we will be monitoring you very closely and a cardiologist will be in the room during the stress. You just need to talk to us and let us know how you are feeling and if you feel uncomfortable at all. After the pictures are started, we will administer the antidote to the medication.

Patients referred by their private physician will be released after a few minutes and a full report of the results will be sent to their physician.

VIABILITY IMAGING

Sometimes, your physician may request VIABILITY imaging, especially if you have had a large heart attack in the past. If Viability imaging is required, it will add an additional 2-3 hours for your appt, but most of that time, you are sitting in a comfortable chair waiting.

After you have completed the Rest/stress part described above, you will be taken out of the camera, while we give you IV glucose and insulin to get your blood sugar to a certain level. When your blood sugar is right, we inject a radioactive sugar (FDG) to further investigate the scar in your heart. After the radioactive sugar has time to metabolize, you go back into the camera for a final scan.

I know this all sounds complicated, but we will always explain things and answer any questions you may have, as we go. Our goal is to make you as comfortable as possible and do the least amount of imaging necessary for you but also to make sure we get the information that your physician needs to take care of you.