



# About Your Skull Base to Mid-Thigh FDG-PET Exam

Positron Emission Tomography (PET) is a nuclear medicine procedure that produces pictures of the metabolism, or chemical activity, within your body. While imaging procedures such as Computed Tomography (CT) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) take pictures of organs and structures within your body, PET scans can detect abnormal changes before a CT or MRI scan can “see” them. This is important because functional changes are often present before structural changes in tissues. A fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG) PET scan uses a radioactive tracer with sugar to find cancer in your body.

**Before the exam:** Depending on the type of study your physician or provider orders, you will typically be asked to not eat for four to six hours before your exam. You are encouraged to drink plain water prior to and leading up to your exam time. You may take any prescribed medications on the day of your exam unless you are told not to do so by your physician or provider. Please wear comfortable clothes, arrive on time, and leave all valuables at home. If you are claustrophobic, please call Scheduling Services at 308-630-2700, option one, for more information. Avoid strenuous activity 24 hours before your exam, and limit yourself to minimal activity on the day of the exam.

**Please remember to bring your ID or insurance forms.**

**The radioactive tracers used for PET exams are created specifically for each patient.** Because these drugs expire within hours, please arrive at your scheduled time to allow for registration, consultation, glucose reading, and radioactive tracer injection. If you miss your appointment for any reason other than an emergency or illness, you will be billed for the cost of the radioactive tracer. Please call Scheduling Services at least one day in advance to either cancel or reschedule your exam.

**During the exam:** First, you will be injected with a radioactive tracer. The amount of radiation in this tracer is small, so your risk of negative radiation effects is low. This tracer is a compound of complex sugars labeled with a short-lived radioisotope. You will rest for approximately 60 minutes while the radioactive compound travels throughout your body.

The technologist will ask you to lie on the scanner table, which will slowly pass through the scanner. The PET scanner looks similar to an MRI scanner, but it is quiet and does not use magnets. The PET scanner detects and records the signals the radioactive tracers emit. The signals are then reassembled into computerized images. Most patients can expect their exam to last around one and a half to two hours. The type of study being performed will determine the exact length of the exam.

**After the exam:** A radiologist will interpret the images from your scan. These results are not immediately available. The radiologist will contact your physician or provider to share information from the scan. **Your referring physician or provider will reach out with test results, or they may be viewed in your MyChart account if you are a registered user.**

The following conditions may exclude you from having a PET exam. Please call Scheduling Services if any of these apply to you or if you have any questions:

- Weight over 500 pounds
- Recent radiation therapy
- Pregnant
- Diabetic or elevated blood sugars