

A PATIENT GUIDE TO THE PET SCAN



Mass General
Imaging
Services

Massachusetts General Hospital
Imaging Services
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Boston, MA 02114

617.724.9729
www.massgeneralimaging.org

OUTPATIENT APPOINTMENT

Name: _____

Date: _____

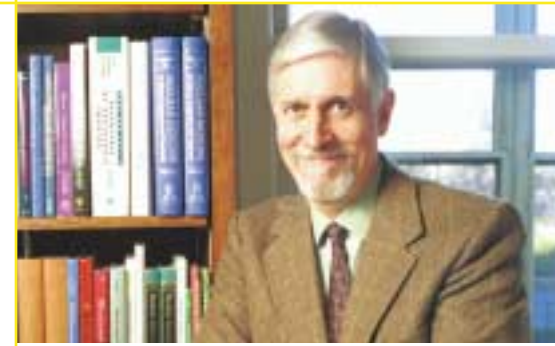
Location: _____

Time: _____

Referring physician:

Referring physician phone number:

MASS GENERAL IMAGING



James H. Thrall, MD
Radiologist-in-Chief
Department of Radiology
Massachusetts General Hospital

Welcome

On behalf of the entire staff, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Mass General Imaging Services. Our Radiology Department provides a full-range of diagnostic testing services utilizing state-of-the-art equipment. No matter what kind of imaging test you are having done, you can rest assured knowing you are receiving some of the finest imaging services available anywhere. In the 1970's, Mass General pioneered the Positron Emission Tomography (PET) nuclear medicine procedure. Today Mass General is still one of only a few facilities in New England offering PET.

We hope that this patient brochure will answer many of your questions about PET. Please also feel free to contact us directly by calling (617) 726-8367.

PET SCAN DEFINED

Positron Emission Tomography, or PET, is a valuable, painless, diagnostic test that allows radiologists (doctors who specialize in the use of imaging for diagnosing medical conditions) a unique view of your body's biological functions. The PET scan is different from an x-ray or MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) or CT (Computerized Tomography) scan in that it looks at your body's metabolic activity and provides important information about your body's tissue. PET scans can be done on the brain, various parts of the body, or the entire body.

Virtually all diseases alter the body's biological processes. PET is able to discover these changes in their earliest stages, often before any symptoms appear, and can provide your doctor with important and accurate information in detecting certain cancers, neurological conditions and cardiac diseases — information that could help determine the most effective treatment plan for you.

SAFETY

The PET exam is safe for patients of any age. However, if you are pregnant, or think you might be, you should tell the technologist before your scan.

OUR STAFF

You will find our staff prompt, courteous, and highly trained and experienced in nuclear medicine. Our scheduler will call you prior to your scan and go over the procedure with you. Once you arrive, a technologist will again explain the scan and answer any questions you might have. All of our technologists are certified nationally by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists or the Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board and are licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

A nuclear medicine radiologist, skilled in reading PET scans, works collaboratively with your physician and any specialists involved with your care.

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WHAT TO DO TO PREPARE FOR YOUR SCAN

Medications

It is important for you to keep to your regular medication schedule unless your physician informs you otherwise — just let our staff know what medications you have taken prior to your scan.

Food and drink

You must fast for six hours prior to your PET scan. If you are a diabetic, you may eat four hours prior to your appointment. If you take medications drink only enough water to swallow them.

When to arrive

You should arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment.

What to bring

Please bring your insurance cards and any insurance forms with you. If you have had previous MRI or CT scans of the area to be scanned, and they were not done at Mass General Hospital, please plan to bring them with you.

What to wear

You should dress in comfortable clothing. It will not be necessary for you to change into a hospital gown. We will ask you to remove jewelry or anything else that might interfere with your scan. It is best, however, if you leave valuable items at home.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE SCAN

The fdg tracer

To begin your scan, the technologist will inject a safe, low dose of short-lived isotopes in a glucose compound in a vein in your arm. You will then have a seat in the waiting room while the isotopes disperse throughout your body. This process usually takes about 30 minutes if you are having a brain scan and about 60 minutes if you are having a body scan.

Scanning

Your technologist will then bring you into the PET scan room where you will lie down on the imaging table. The technologist will position the part of your body to be scanned. The PET camera does not touch you, nor do you feel anything. The technologist leaves the room, but can see you at all times from the observation window in the adjoining room and remains in voice communication throughout the scan. In order to place you in the best position for the PET camera, you will feel the patient table move slightly five or six times during the scan. It is important for you to lie as still as possible. If you are having a brain scan, we custom fit a lightweight mask to help keep your head still. If you like, you may listen to music during the scan.

Length of scan

The actual scanning time varies with the type of scan you are having. On average, a brain scan takes 30 minutes; a body scan 60 minutes. Please plan on being at Mass General Hospital a total of 2 ½ hours. This allows ample time for your questions and takes into account the wait for the isotopes to disperse throughout your body.

AFTER THE SCAN

You have no restrictions after a PET scan and can go about your normal activities. To help eliminate the isotopes from your body, drink plenty of fluids. Since you have fasted prior to the scan, you should eat something right after the test.

Results

Rapid results are essential not only for your peace of mind, but also for your physician to begin planning your treatment. Mass General Hospital radiologists read your scan and forward the results to your physician, who will discuss them with you.

APPOINTMENT PARTICULARS

Appointments

Your physician may call 617-726-8367 to make an appointment for you. Generally, you can get an appointment within a few days. When urgent, your physician can request a same-day scan.

Parking

You may park in either of the two garages located conveniently in front of the hospital's main entrance. Valet parking is also available at this same entrance.

Hours

PET scans are completed daily from 8 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday.

PET scan locations

There are two PET scanners at Mass General Hospital. Among the items our scheduler will discuss with you over the telephone prior to your appointment is where to report for your exam. Mass General has excellent signage, so it will be easy for you to find your way around the hospital.

For further information

For further information about PET, please call (617) 726-8367. We will make sure you have all the information you desire.



DIRECTIONS TO MGH - MAIN CAMPUS

From the south (by automobile)

Via Southeast Expressway (I-93) take the Storrow Drive exit. Take the Government Center exit off Storrow Drive. Follow signs to Downtown and Government Center (Cambridge Street). At the first set of lights take a left onto North Grove Street. Parking garages are on the left and the right.

From the north (by automobile)

Via I-93 or 1-1 take the Storrow Drive exit and get in the left lane. Take the Government Center exit off Storrow Drive. Follow signs to Downtown and Government Center (Cambridge Street). At the first set of lights take a left onto North Grove Street. Parking garages are on the left and the right.

From the west (by automobile)

Via the Massachusetts Turnpike take the Cambridge-Allston exit. Bear right after the toll booth. Make a right at the first set of lights onto Storrow Drive. After approximately five (5) miles take the Government Center exit. Follow signs to Downtown and Government Center (Cambridge Street). At the first set of lights take a left onto North Grove Street. Parking garages are on the left and the right.

By subway

Please note: Charles Street Subway Station is NOT handicapped accessible. Take the Red Line train to Charles Street/MGH Station. Follow exit signs to MGH. Follow Cambridge Street one block. Take left onto North Grove Street.

By train (commuter rail and Amtrak)

From South Station take the Red Line toward Alewife. From North Station take the Green Line to Park Street and change to the Red Line heading toward Alewife. Take the Red Line to Charles Street/MGH Station. Follow exit signs to MGH. Follow Cambridge Street one block. Take left onto North Grove Street.