A guide to having a kidney function test

There are many types of diagnostic tests, which can show information about the kidneys and their function.

**What is involved in having a kidney function test?**

It takes place in the Nuclear Medicine Department and may be performed as an inpatient or an outpatient.

There is **no** preparation needed before the test.

The procedure is performed by Nuclear Medicine Technologists who will need to obtain your height and weight.

A small amount of radioactive Cr51 EDTA is injected into your bloodstream. We then calculate the rate at which it is removed by the kidneys.

The Nuclear Medicine Technologist will arrange to take blood samples at 2, 3 and 4 hours after the injection.

Therefore the time of injection and the time blood samples are taken are **very important**.

**Can I resume normal activities when I leave?**

During and after the test you can carry on with your normal activities. You can eat and drink as normal. There are no restrictions to activities after the test.

**When will I know the results?**

Not straight away as we will need to calculate how well your kidneys are working. We will send a report to the doctor who asked for the test. You will get the report when you see your doctor at your next outpatient appointment.

**Are there any risks involved in having a kidney function test?**

There have been no adverse reactions recorded for this test but you may have some bruising around the injection site.
**Radiation risks**
This test involves using radioactive materials and so has the usual risks associated with ionising radiation.

The amount of radiation used is roughly equivalent to that which you receive from natural background radiation in about 4 days. This adds very slightly to the risk of, for example, developing a cancer. However, as one in three of us will develop a cancer at some stage during our lives, the added risk is very small.

The doctor who referred you for this scan believes that the benefit of having the test is likely to be greater for you than any of the potential risks involved.

The risk may be considered greater if you are pregnant and you should inform the Nuclear Medicine Department if you are pregnant or you think you might be pregnant.

Tell your doctor if you are breastfeeding as the investigation may need to be delayed until you have stopped.

**Are there any alternative treatment options?**
Your consultant has recommended this procedure/treatment as being the best option. However, the alternative to this procedure are Nuclear Medicine Renal Scan. If you would like more information about this, please speak to your consultant or one of the nurses caring for you.

There is also the option of not undertaking this investigation. The consequences of not having this investigation are that your consultant may not have a full understanding of the cause of your symptoms and hence may not be able to offer you the best appropriate management. If you would like more information please speak to your consultant or a member of staff caring for you.

**References**
Fleming JS, Zivanovic MA, Blake GM, Burniston M, Cosgriff PS; British Nuclear Medicine Society. Guidelines for the measurement of glomerular filtration rate using plasma sampling

If you have any or queries, or require further information please contact the Nuclear Medicine Department, Royal Derby Hospital on 01332 788197.

NHS Direct is a 24 hour nurse led, confidential service providing general health care advice and information. Telephone 0845 4647 or visit the website at www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

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