



# NUCLEAR MEDICINE SEHCAT STUDY

## Patient Information

### What is a SeHCAT Study?

A SeHCAT study is a scan to look at whether your gut is able to absorb bile acids properly. Bile acid malabsorption can cause chronic diarrhoea, and diagnosing this will help your doctor to treat you effectively.

### Preparation

In order to ensure the test works properly, it is very important that **you do not eat or drink at all for 4 hours before the appointment time**. After the first scan you can eat and drink as normal. You will just be asked to take a small amount of water with the capsule.

If you are diabetic or if you take regular prescription medicine that needs to be taken with or after food, please contact us to discuss how to prepare for the examination.

Please also contact us in advance if you are on any medication for bile acid malabsorption (such as aluminium hydroxide or cholestyramine).

### Pregnancy/Breastfeeding

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding it is essential that you let us know before your appointment date. If you are a female of child bearing age (12-55 years old), you will be asked about your pregnancy and breastfeeding status. If you are unable to confirm you are not pregnant a pregnancy test may be performed.

### Chaperones

All patients are entitled to have a chaperone present for any consultation, examination or procedure where they feel one is required. This chaperone may be a family member or friend. On occasions you may prefer a formal chaperone to be present (ie. trained member of staff).



## The examination

This examination is divided in two separate days which you must attend (7 day study). On the first day a radiographer will explain the procedure to you and will ask you a few questions about your health records. You will then you be asked to swallow a capsule containing bile acid together with a small amount of radioactive tracer. This substance is carried through the stomach to your bowels and emits very low level of radiation which will be detected by a piece of equipment called a gamma camera.

The capsule behaves like natural bile acid and this should be absorbed by your gut as normal. You will then be sent away and asked to return **3 HOURS** after administration for the imaging scan. This time gap is to allow the tracer to be fully absorbed into your bowel.

When you return for your imaging 3 hours later you will lay on a scan table with the camera placed above and below your abdomen to acquire images of your bowel. The machine is very quiet and you do not go through a tube or tunnel.

After this study you must return to the department 7days later to have your final scan. You will be given the appointment time for the second scan on the day of your first scan. This allows us to calculate how much of the tracer is retained in your system, and consequently absorbed.

You do not need to undress for the examination, but you may need to remove metal objects from your clothing or pockets, such as coins and/or belts as these will interfere with the quality of the pictures.

## How long will it take?

The administration of the capsule (on the first day only) takes approximately 10 minutes. Each of the imaging scans take 10 minutes.

You are free to leave the department/hospital on the first day in the gap between the administration and the scan.

## Who will be present?

Your scan will be performed by a Nuclear Medicine trained member of staff which stays with you in the room while scanning. In addition we might have students in our department, and they will observe the procedure if you give your permission.

## Can I bring a friend or relative with me?

You can bring a friend or relative with you and they may accompany you for the injection or scan. Because our waiting room is very small, we would prefer that you do not bring more than one person with you. It is advisable NOT to have a pregnant woman or any children with you. This is to avoid exposing them to unnecessary radiation.

## Will the injection hurt?

No injection is given. The radioactive tracer is given in a capsule. It will not make you drowsy or prevent you from driving a car.

## Is radioactivity dangerous?

The amount of radiation involved is similar to that from an x-ray examination. The radioactivity naturally disperses from the body and is largely gone in 24 hours. The very low risk involved is balanced against the benefit of the information the examination provides for your doctors.

## After the examination

You will be asked to drink more than usual for the rest of the day to help clear the substance from your body. Otherwise you can continue as normal.

## How do I obtain my results?

The results will be sent to the doctor who asked for the examination, and will normally be with them within two working weeks, but if you have an appointment sooner than this, please let us know, and we will ensure the results are available for then.

## How to find us

The Nuclear Medicine department is in the main X-ray department at East Surrey Hospital. This is on the ground floor of the hospital, closest to the main entrance. You can also reach the department by following the main corridor from the east entrance. **Please report to the main reception.**

## Further Information

If you need to cancel, change your appointment or have any concerns/queries about your examination, please contact the Nuclear Medicine department on: 01737 68511 x6001 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm).

Directions, parking and travel information for East Surrey Hospital and Crawley Hospital is available on our website at [www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk/finding-us/](http://www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk/finding-us/)

## Gamma Camera Appeal Fund

A gamma camera appeal fund was set up by Mr and Mrs Bell in 1987 in memory of their son David, and it has been supported by local people ever since. Initially the funds were used to purchase our first gamma camera, and since then it has been used to purchase new and updated equipment; it has also been used for continuing professional education so that staff are able to provide an even better level of service to their patients.

If you would like to contribute to the appeal fund, please send a cheque made payable to Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (Gamma Camera). Thank you.

## Contact Us

Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust  
Diagnostic Imaging Department  
East Surrey Hospital  
Redhill Surrey RH1 5RH

Nuclear Medicine Department  
Tel: 01737 768511 Ext.6001 (Monday to Friday 9 am to 5pm)  
[www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk](http://www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk)

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Telephone: 01737 231 958

Email: [pals@sash.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@sash.nhs.uk)

Write to: PALS, East Surrey Hospital  
Redhill, Surrey RH1 5RH

You can also ask a member of staff to contact PALS on your behalf.

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This information can be made available in other languages and formats, including in larger text. Contact: 01737 231 958 for help.

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