

# PATIENT PREPARATION FOR NUCLEAR MEDICINE PROCEDURES INVOLVING INJECTIONS

Some nuclear medicine procedures involve drawing blood or receiving an injection of a tracing agent through a vein in the arm. Some patients get nervous at the thought of these procedures. The following are suggestions to help you prepare for an exam that involves venipuncture (the process of inserting a needle into a vein).



## Stay well hydrated

The veins in our body contain fluid, so if you haven't had much to drink during the day, your veins may not be as easy to access and are more likely to collapse flat when a needle is inserted. (Please note that while it is helpful to be well hydrated, this may not always be possible due to certain exam preparations or medical conditions—for example if you are asked to fast or if you have fluid restrictions. As with all procedures, you should discuss preparations with your healthcare provider or the nuclear medicine technologist before the exam.)

## Communicate with your health care provider

Nuclear medicine technologists are trained in venipuncture, but many have different levels of expertise. Don't be afraid to ask for a technologist who is experienced with your specific needs, such as small, deep, fragile or rolling veins.

## Disclose any prior negative experiences

If you have ever passed out or felt dizzy or lightheaded after any type of venipuncture procedure, no matter how long ago, please notify the caregiver before your procedure. Often, they can have you lay down to avoid complications.

## Do not smoke and avoid using products with nicotine before your exam

Nicotine is a stimulant found in cigarettes, vape, nicotine patches, and gum. It can cause your blood vessels to constrict, making it more difficult to draw blood or perform an injection. Avoid using these products immediately prior to your exam.

## Dress comfortably

Often a blood draw or injection is performed in the fold of the arm. Be sure to dress in a way that allows comfortable access to that area.

## What to do if swelling (hematoma) or an infiltration occurs during the venipuncture

**A hematoma** is a swollen area filled with blood, which can occur if the needle is pierced through the vein. Compression and ice should be applied to reduce swelling, and the area should be elevated if possible. The blood from the hematoma will be reabsorbed by your body and should not cause any harm.

**Infiltrations** (sometimes referred to as *extravasations*) are when some of the fluid from an injection leaks into the tissue around the vein. In some cases, this can cause pain such as burning or stinging, redness, and swelling. Compression and the application of ice packs and/or warm compresses may be used to reduce swelling or to improve blood flow to the area. Depending on the type and amount of infiltration, the technologist will advise you if your exam should be rescheduled. All venipuncture sites should be covered with a bandage to prevent infection until healed.

While it is unlikely that a hematoma or infiltration will cause any harm, you should notify your primary health care provider if the pain or swelling does not decrease with time or if you notice any changes to your skin.