

Sentinel lymph node scintigraphy for gynecological cancer

Purpose of the study

This study locates the lymph node that lymphatic vessels drain from the area of a lesion. This lymph node is called the sentinel lymph node. The sentinel lymph node location will be marked on your skin with a pen so that the surgeon will find it more easily when you have surgery.

A marked sentinel lymph node could be healthy or diseased. We will not know if cancer has spread to the sentinel lymph node until the surgeon and the pathologist have examined it.

Preparing for the study

- No preparation is necessary for nuclear medicine study.
- You will receive the necessary preparation instructions for the surgery from the department.

What to expect at the study

You will receive a small amount of radioactive tracer. The doctor will inject the tracer with a thin needle into four places next to the area of change in the gynecology department. You will be given painkillers beforehand. You will be brought to the Nuclear Medicine Unit for imaging either immediately or after two hours, depending on the injection site.

A cross-sectional image of the pelvic area is taken and, if necessary, 1-2 local images are taken. The location of the sentinel lymph node is marked on the skin with a pen during the examination. More than one lymph node may be seen on the scan, but this is normal. The lymph nodes are usually seen in the inguinal region.

The scan takes about half an hour, and during that time you must lie still on your back.

After the study

Once the scan is complete, you will be returned to the ward to wait for admission to the procedure.

If the surgery is the next day and you are allowed to go home overnight, you should avoid holding small children in your arms or next to them for more than half an hour in total until the morning due to the low radiation emitted by the radioactive tracer.

Updated 12.2.2026