Nuclear Medicine Department
PET CT Patient Preparation/Instructions

Appointment Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Your physician has ordered a Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scan for you. PET images can provide important information about many conditions affecting the body, which will help your doctor plan appropriate treatment for you.

PET images are different from those from more conventional imaging equipment such as X-ray, CT, or MRI. These images show bone and tissue structure, while PET images contain large amounts of information about tissue function.

CLEAR, UNSWEETENED LIQUIDS 6 HOURS PRIOR
You may drink only clear unsweetened liquids 6 hours prior to the scan, **preferably water only**. No food, chewing gum, sodas, juice, cough drops or anything that has sugar in it. If necessary, you may eat a few soda crackers with your prescribed medications. Drink plenty of water 2 hours prior to your appointment. You may have black coffee without any additives. You are not to have bread, pasta, fruit, or sugar/desserts for dinner the night prior to your scan.

INSULIN DEPENDENT DIABETICS
Diabetic patients who are insulin dependent may eat eggs, meat, 1 piece of toast with butter and water or black coffee with their insulin 4-6 hours prior to the appointment time. The patient's blood sugar levels must be under 180 the day of the appointment.

NO ALCOHOL
Do not have any alcohol for at least 12 hours prior to the scan. Alcohol raises the blood sugar level.

AVOID STRENUOUS EXERCISE
The patient must avoid all strenuous exercise for at least 1 day prior to the scan.

BRING PREVIOUS X-RAY IMAGING OR LAB RESULTS FOR COMPARISON
Bring any previous X-ray imaging and reports of the area being scanned that were performed at other hospitals for the Radiologist to compare.

WHAT TO WEAR
You should dress in warm comfortable clothing. It will not be necessary for you to change into a hospital gown. If you are wearing jewelry or anything else that might interfere with your scan, we will ask you to remove it. The PET scan is conducted in a secure environment. It is best, however, that you leave valuable items at home.

ANXIOUS OR UNEASY?
If you are anxious or uneasy about the PET scan and are currently taking anti-anxiety medications, you may take it one hour prior to the scan. If you are not currently taking anti-anxiety medication and feel you will need it, contact your physician's office so that he or she can prescribe an appropriate drug and dosage.

PAIN CONTROL?
The scan is not painful, but you must lie still during imaging. If you are having pain that would make this difficult or if you have a movement disorder, you may need sedation for your study. Discuss this with your physician prior to your imaging appointment so that arrangements can be made. Please bring your medications with you on the day of your exam.

Reviewed 11/25/2025, Policy Manager

INSURANCE AND PHYSICIAN WRITTEN ORDER
Bring your insurance card and the physician's written order if it was given to you for the test being done.

REGISTRATION
Plan to arrive 30 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment or the time the technologist will give you during a phone conversation to complete registration and history forms. Report directly to the registration desk in the CT/MRI/PET waiting area and let the receptionist know you are here for a PET scan. The PET radiopharmaceuticals have a very short half-life, which means they can only be used within a limited time frame. It is, therefore, important that you are on time for your appointment. If, by chance, a procedure has to be cancelled or rescheduled, please notify the Nuclear Medicine Department no later than 24 hours prior to the scheduled appointment or you may be responsible for the cost of the PET radiopharmaceutical.

DIRECTIONS TO THE PET CENTER
Take exit 91 off Interstate 64 and follow signs directing you to the hospital. Take the first hospital entrance on the right. Go straight at the stop sign into the parking lot.

PARKING INSTRUCTIONS
Park near the entrance or you may be dropped off in the circle. Free Valet parking is available. After entering the glass atrium, turn right and proceed down the hall to the CT/MRI/PET Department waiting area.

HOW LONG DOES THE PROCEDURE TAKE?
You can expect to be at the PET center for approximately two hours. The actual scan takes approximately 30 minutes but there is a delay of 60-90 minutes between the injection and the scan.

HOW DOES THE PROCEDURE WORK?
To begin the procedure, a drop of blood will be taken from your finger or from the IV site and tested to measure the amount of sugar in it. Too much sugar in your bloodstream can inhibit the results of the scan.

An IV is started in a vein in your arm and a small amount of a radioactive glucose compound will be injected into your bloodstream. There is no danger to you from this injection. Glucose (also known as sugar) is a common substance every cell in your body needs to function. Cancer cells require more "fuel" to function than normal cells, so they take up glucose in greater quantities and show up as dark spots on PET images. The technologist will explain the entire procedure to you and will answer your questions.

After the injection, the lights will be dimmed, and you will be asked to relax and wait 45-60 minutes while the compound is distributed throughout your body. We ask that you do not bring any reading materials, etc. with you. You will then go to the bathroom to empty your bladder. Upon returning, the technologist will bring you into the 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 will be in constant visual and audio contact with you during your scan. In order to position you correctly for the PET camera, you will feel the patient table move slightly 5 or 6 times during the scan. It is important for you to lie as still as possible. The results of your PET study will be given to your doctor within a few days.

HOW WILL I FEEL AFTERWARDS?
You should feel fine. There are no side effects from the injected radiopharmaceutical and the radiation risk is minimal. The material is so short-lived that it will be gone in several hours. You may drive home after the procedure as long as you didn't take any relaxation medication.

HAVE QUESTIONS…….
Call the Augusta Health Nuclear Medicine Department at 540-332-4441 with any questions you may have.