

Radiation and Security Checkpoints

An information sheet for nuclear cardiology patients

In these days of heightened security, radiation scans are being conducted at more and more transportation checkpoints. These machines have highly sensitive detectors, which are able to passively scan the whole body. However, while the scan is able to pick up even tiny amounts of radiation being emitted, it may not be sophisticated enough to detect the type of radioactive material involved. Consequently, security officials may err on the side of caution until the situation is evaluated, which could lead to a delay in the patient's travel. This has caused the nuclear cardiology/nuclear medicine community to seek methods of communication to decrease any potential delays, as millions of cardiovascular imaging patients undergo a procedure involving radionuclides each year.

What Patients Should Know

Although the radioactive material used in nuclear medicine diagnostic testing is very small and soon loses its radioactivity, it still may require a period of time before a patient stops giving off detectable levels of radiation. The amount of time can vary depending on which tracer was used. Ask your doctor how long the tracer may be detectable.

Travel Tips for Nuclear Cardiology Patients

When it comes to nuclear cardiology and stress-free travel, patients should consider the following tips:

1. **Plan ahead.** If possible, patients should try to schedule travel after the period of detectable radiation has elapsed.
2. **Talk with your doctor.** Patients should find out what type of radioisotope was used and how long they should refrain from using public transportation.
3. **Obtain proper documentation.** In some cases, a doctor may provide their patients with a letter or card that explains the procedure and provides a contact for security officials to use to verify the information. Not all patients who receive a diagnostic isotope will need documentation, but those who do should carry it with them at all times while traveling. (See below for an example of an information card).
4. **Be cooperative and inform your doctor.** If you are stopped at a security checkpoint due to setting off a radiation detector, please be cooperative. While you are of no danger to the public, you are triggering an alarm and it is the security official's duty to investigate the situation. Also, make sure to inform your doctor that you were stopped for triggering a radiation device.

Doctor discretion is advised in distributing patient information cards

SECURITY PERSONNEL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT NOTIFICATION

Nuclear Cardiology Patient Information Card

(Patient Name)

has undergone a nuclear medicine procedure on ____/____/____ at _____
(Date) (Facility Name)

involving a small quantity of short-lived radioactive materials for medical use.

Type of Isotope: _____ Amount Used: _____

The dose received by the patient poses no significant danger to the public and is allowed by medical regulations. If there are any questions, please contact:

(Contact Name)

at _____
(Contact Phone Number)