Nuclear medicine lung (VQ) scans
Information for patients during pregnancy

Description of procedure

Your doctors have ordered a test called **nuclear medicine ventilation and perfusion lung (VQ) scan** to see if you have a blood clot in your lungs (called a pulmonary embolus). The test is usually done in two parts.

During the first part you will wear a mask over your nose and mouth so that you can breathe in a small amount of a radioactive gas while we take images of your lungs (sometimes this part of the test can be omitted). As you lie on the table during the scan, you will need to hold your breath for a very short time.

For the second part of the exam we will inject a small amount of a radioactive material into a vein in your arm. After the injection, we will take more images of your lungs. The test does expose you to some radiation.

Radiation (X-rays) to the fetus during pregnancy

The small radiation dose the fetus receives during this procedure has not been associated with birth defects. Complications have only been seen with radiation doses much higher than those used for this test.

There is also a small risk to your baby for the development of cancer later in life related to radiation exposure. These cases are rare.

Risks of not having the nuclear medicine VQ scan

This study will help your doctor find out if you have a blood clot in your lungs. This is a potentially life-threatening condition. Your doctors have asked you to have this test because they feel the benefits of knowing if you have a clot are greater than the risks (explained above) to you and your baby from the radiation. We feel this is the safest and most effective test for this very serious condition.

Assurances

If you decide not to have the test, your decision will not affect how you are treated by your doctors or by hospital staff. We will continue to provide you the best care available. You will need to sign a standard informed consent form before having this test.

Questions

We will be happy to answer any questions that you have about this test.