WHAT IS A NUCLEAR MEDICINE SCAN?
Nuclear medicine uses small amounts of radioactive material to diagnose or treat a variety of diseases, including many types of cancers or heart disease. Nuclear imaging is a method of producing images by detecting radiation from different parts of the body after small amounts of radioactive material are administered, typically by intravenous injection. The main difference between nuclear imaging and other radiologic tests is that nuclear imaging assesses how organs function, whereas other imaging methods assess anatomy, or how the organs look. It is often used to view the skeleton, thyroid gland, liver, gall bladder, kidneys and stomach. These agents highlight both normal and abnormal issues and help in the detection of abnormalities. The images are recorded and documented in our computer system.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A NUCLEAR MEDICINE SCAN?
Wear comfortable clothing to your exam, although you may be asked to wear a gown. Women should always inform their physician or technologist if there is any possibility that they are pregnant or if they are breastfeeding. You should inform your technologist of any medications you are taking, including vitamins and herbal supplements. You should also inform them of medical conditions, recent illnesses, and allergies. Jewelry and other metallic accessories should be left at home if possible, or removed prior to the exam, because they may interfere with the scan. Individual instructions may vary, depending on the type of scan you are undergoing.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE EXAM?
A radionuclide will be injected into a vein or taken orally. Your technologist will position you on the scanning table under a gamma camera. This makes it possible for the camera to detect radioactive particles that have channeled to certain organs and track the organs’ functions. You will be asked to lie still to ensure a clear image. The length of time for nuclear medicine procedures varies greatly, depending on the type of exam. Actual scanning time for nuclear imaging exams can take from 20 minutes to two hours. Some exams may require that you return for additional images the next day. When the examination is complete, you may be asked to wait until your technologist checks the images. Occasionally, additional images are obtained for clarification or better visualization of certain areas or structures.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE EXAM?
You may resume your normal activities after your scan. If any special instructions are necessary, you will be informed by a technologist or radiologist.

QUESTIONS?
If you have any questions or concerns about your exam, please call 913.676.2505 or e-mail smmcimaging@shawneemission.org.