Hepatobiliary Imaging

What is Hepatobiliary Imaging?
Hepatobiliary imaging is a type of nuclear medicine scan that helps evaluate the liver, gallbladder and the ducts that are part of the biliary system. These scans use radioactive materials called radiopharmaceuticals or radiotracers that are injected intravenously, swallowed or inhaled as a gas, depending on the type of nuclear medicine exam you are undergoing. Radioactive emissions from the radiotracer are then detected by a special camera that produces pictures and provides molecular information. Nuclear medicine imaging procedures are noninvasive and, with the exception of intravenous injections, are usually painless. The radiation exposure from this exam is no more than from a routine X-ray procedure.

CPT Code
78227 With CCK
78226 Without CCK

Indications
Abdominal pain that may be caused by a sudden inflammation of the gallbladder called cholecystitis, pain or fever following surgery on the gallbladder or the upper gastrointestinal tract, biliary atresia in newborns (a blockage in the ducts that carry bile from the liver to the gallbladder).

Contraindications
Pregnancy, known allergies to materials used in nuclear medicine scans.

How Does The Patient Prepare?
The patient should not eat or drink for at least four hours prior to the exam and should not have tests that use barium for 48 hours prior to the exam. The patient should inform the physician and technologist of any medications taken, including vitamins and herbal supplements, and of any allergies, recent illnesses or other medical conditions. Women should always inform the physician and technologist if there is any possibility that they are pregnant or if they are breastfeeding. The patient will be asked to remove jewelry and other metallic accessories, and may be asked to wear a gown during the exam.

What Happens During the Test?
A hepatobiliary scan involves injecting a radioactive material (radiotracer) into a vein. The substance travels through the blood to the organ(s) of concern. After the initial series of images is taken, the patient may be given a medication that causes the gallbladder to empty. This medication may cause slight abdominal discomfort or nausea, but it should pass within a few minutes. Additional images will be taken as the gallbladder empties. The exam is usually completed within one to four hours, during which time the patient may be allowed to get up from the imaging table. Although the injection itself can be slightly painful, the exam is otherwise painless.

After the Test
Unless instructed otherwise by the physician or technologist, the patient may resume normal diet and activities after the exam.

The Results
A radiologist will analyze the images and send a signed report to the referring physician within one business day.

(Information adapted from www.radiologyinfo.org)

This information is intended for use as merely a guideline for referring physicians and their staff members only. It contains information pertaining to the most commonly ordered exams and indications. However, Shawnee Mission Medical Center Radiology does not recommend any particular examination. Individual radiologist preference or patient circumstances may dictate ordering alternative studies. Although contrast codes are not needed to place an order, the following contrast codes may be used in placing orders:

CT Contrast Q9967, MRI contrast A9577 and A9579.