Thyroid Uptake / Scan

What is a Thyroid Uptake / Scan?
A thyroid scan is a type of nuclear medicine imaging that is used to determine the size, shape and position of the thyroid gland. A physician may order this exam to determine if the gland is working properly or if any cancer has spread beyond the thyroid gland; to diagnose problems with the gland; to detect lumps, nodules and inflammation; or to evaluate changes in the gland due to medication, surgery, radiotherapy or chemotherapy. The thyroid uptake is performed to evaluate the function of the gland. The thyroid is a gland in the neck that controls metabolism, the chemical process that regulates the rate at which the body converts food to energy. A whole-body thyroid scan is typically performed on people who have, or who have had, thyroid cancer.

CPT Code
78012

Indications
Thyroid enlargement, abnormal blood levels, Goiter, neck tenderness, weight loss or gain, difficulty sleeping, fatigue, evaluate status of existing cancer.

Contraindications
Pregnancy, patients who have received iodine-based contrast media for medical testing within the last eight weeks. Due to the small amount of radioactivity released for a while after the test, women who are breastfeeding may need to make special preparations after the test to stop breastfeeding for a short time and to avoid close contact with young children.

How Does The Patient Prepare?
Thyroid medications should be stopped up to eight weeks in advance of the exam. In the days prior to the exam, blood tests may be performed to measure the level of thyroid hormones in the blood. The patient may be told not to eat for several hours before the exam because eating can affect the accuracy of the uptake measurement. The patient should inform the physician and technologist of any medications taken, including vitamins, herbal supplements and over the counter preparations, especially those containing iodine (kelp, seaweed, cough syrups, multivitamins or heart medications). The physician and technologist should also be informed any allergies, recent illnesses, medical conditions, chance of pregnancy or any medical test within the last two months that involved the use of iodine contrast material. Jewelry and other metallic materials will be removed and a gown may be provided.

What Happens During the Test?
Scan: Depending on the type of scan, the dose of radiotracer is administered by IV injection, swallowed or inhaled as a gas. When radiotracer is taken by mouth, in either liquid or capsule form, it is typically swallowed up to 24 hours before the scan. The radiotracer given by intravenous injection is usually given up to 30 minutes prior to the test. The patient will remove all jewelry or metallic materials and lie on a moveable exam table with the head tipped backward and neck extended. A specialized camera will then take a series of images, capturing images of the thyroid gland from three different angles. Actual scanning time for a thyroid scan is 40 minutes or less.
Uptake: The patient will be given radioactive iodine (I-123 or I-131) in liquid or capsule form to swallow. The thyroid uptake will begin several hours to 24 hours later. Often, two separate uptake measurements are obtained at different times. For example, measurements may be taken at four to six hours, and again at 24 hours. The patient will sit in a chair facing a stationary probe positioned over the thyroid gland in the neck. Actual scanning time for each thyroid uptake is five minutes or less.
**After the Test**
Unless instructed otherwise, the patient may resume normal 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.