

COREPSYCH

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: SPECT IMAGING

What is SPECT imaging (Single Photon Emission Computer Tomography)?

--Brain SPECT imaging is a nuclear medicine procedure that evaluates cerebral blood flow. It evaluates areas of the brain that work well, areas of the brain that work too hard, and areas of the brain that do not work hard enough. The information from the scans, along with a detailed clinical history, and with other laboratory testing, helps us understand the underlying brain patterns associated with our patients' problems and help to pinpoint the right treatment to balance brain function.

What is the procedure?

--You will be placed in a quiet room and a small IV line will be inserted into your arm. For the concentration study, you will take a 15 minute computerized test of attention and focus. Three or four minutes into performing the test, the imaging solution will be injected through the IV, and then you will complete the test. For the baseline study, you will be instructed to sit quietly. Several minutes later, the imaging solution will be injected through the IV. After another short period of time, you will lie on the imaging table and the SPECT camera will slowly rotate around your head taking images of brain blood flow (you are not placed inside a tube). The time on the table is approximately 18 minutes.

What is the injection and are there side effects?

--Since a SPECT scan is a nuclear medicine procedure, it requires the injection of a very small amount of a radioisotope through a small needle into a vein in the arm. The medicine we inject is not a dye; therefore, people typically do not have allergic responses to it.

Do I have to be off medication and for how long?

--We prefer to scan patients on a little medication as possible, if not off. We realize this is not always practical depending on your circumstances. Stimulant medications need to be stopped four days prior to the first scan. Any other medications: need consultation with your treating physician regarding how to decrease or go off your medications. While we prefer little/no medications, some situations require continuing medications for the studies. We will be happy to discuss the variables if you have a question, without charge.

How many days do I need to be at the clinic itself?

--You should allow two days for the complete evaluation process. One day for the concentration and one for the baseline scan.

Why do I need two scans?

--Two scans will allow us to evaluate the changes in brain from the resting state to a concentration state.

What is your success rate?

--Our success rate varies with each case. Variations with unpredictable variables such as drug metabolic rates and unidentified somatic metabolic disorders do occur. We see children from five years old to elderly adults. In addition to clinical history, we look at the underlying brain neurophysiology, and taken together (history, scans, and other specific laboratory panels), we collect more evidence and thereby often achieve more targeted treatment plans. More information brings more precision.

Where else can I get a scan?

--UCLA, Harbor General Hospital, Oregon Healthy Sciences University, and UC, Irvine, Chicago and other parts of the country are using SPECT cameras. Two important variables: 1. The cameras must use the *correct software, either Odyssey or Segami*. We will have difficulties understanding scans presented as tiny tomographic views with less sophisticated software. 2. The second main difference with every SPECT facility is the personal variation in *experience of the readers of the scans*, finding those who can blend the SPECT images with a full understanding of psychopharmacology and metabolic medicine. No matter what excellent scans from top-of-the-line software reveal, treatment still comes down to one simple common denominator: good patient care in the reading of the scans and in the aftercare.

Does insurance cover this? How can I find out?

--Some insurance companies will reimburse for the procedures, however some do not. HMO's typically do not reimburse. PPO's may reimburse a percentage of the cost, however, it depends on your carrier and plan. To find out if you will be reimbursed, please call your insurance carrier. We can provide you with the procedure codes they will need in order to determine if you will be reimbursed.

Do you offer phone consultations prior to scheduling an appointment?

---Yes. If you would like to schedule a consultation with a physician, you can do so by calling for a phone appointment. The charge for a half-session (30 minutes) is \$150 and a full session (one hour) is \$300. No charge for answers to simple, brief questions.

Do I need a referral from my doctor?

--No, unless required by your insurance company. If you would like to investigate your need for SPECT imaging, you may contact the CorePsych directly for a longer meeting to discuss the details. For administrative matters, our intake coordinator, JR at the Virginia Beach office, will make all the arrangements and has experience with scheduling imaging.

Do you have any other more comprehensive information?

--Yes. We have an interesting monograph called *Why SPECT?* Just ask JR at the number above and she can email, fax or hardmail it to you – with references and specifics. For the most comprehensive and easily available list of hundreds of references and peer reviewed abstracts, we suggest you go to Amen Clinics website: www.brainplace.com