

Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Qualifiers for PET Scan

A Guide For Patients August 22, 2008

This information is provided for you to increase knowledge of the Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Studies/Programs funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term. Your physician must submit a completed application form on your behalf to determine if you qualify for medical services to be paid for by this program.

Your physician may make a referral on your behalf to a principal investigator of the appropriate clinical trial, or to the nuclear medicine department at the PET Registry Coordinating Centre for a registry study that matches your conditions.

If you are **NOT** a candidate for any of the clinical trails or registry studies, you might still be able to receive a funded PET scan in Ontario through the Ontario PET Access Program. To determine if you qualify for medical services to be paid for by this program your physician must submit a completed application form on your behalf. PET Access Program applications are processed by the Provider Services Branch, Out-of-Country Unit.

What Is a PET Scan?

PET scans can detect and stage (determine the spread of) cancers, often before they are evident through other tests such as CT, MRI, or X-ray. This technology can be used to detect and evaluate different types of cancer or heart disease.

A PET scan examines the body's chemistry. Most common medical tests, like CT and MRI, show details about the structure of the body. A PET scan is different as it provides information about function.

What Does a PET Scan do?

A PET scan is used to diagnose and stage patients with cancer, as well as patients with certain heart disorders. PET scans are used most often to detect cancer and to examine the effects of cancer therapy or treatment by characterizing biochemical changes in the cancer.

In cancer, a PET scan can:

- Distinguish benign from malignant tumours
- Stage cancer by showing the spread of cancer (metastases) anywhere in the body
- Prove whether or not treatment therapies are working

In the heart, a PET scan can:

- Quantify the extent of heart disease
- Determine, after a heart attack, if the heart muscle would benefit from surgery

Does OHIP pay for the cost of a PET Scan?

PET scanning is presently not an insured health service in Ontario.

Positron emission tomography is a nuclear medicine diagnostic imaging procedure using positron emitting radiopharmaceuticals, often F18 fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG).

The reason why a PET scan is not covered by OHIP is because the FDG used by most Ontario PET centres is currently not approved by Health Canada for routine use, but may be used for research purposes. Regulation 552.24.16 under the Ontario Health Insurance Act specifically excludes coverage for “an examination or procedure for the purpose of a research or survey program other than an assessment that is necessary to determine if an insured person is suitable for the program”.

Another reason that OHIP does not insure this service is because the clinical usefulness of PET scanning is not yet known.

MOHLTC may fund PET Scan:

Ontario is providing funding for approximately 1,500 PET scans per year (over a two-year period) for patients enrolled in five clinical trials and six registry studies at four geographical sites. Indications covered are non-small cell lung, head and neck, breast and colorectal cancers, as well as single pulmonary nodule and suspected recurrent germ cell, thyroid and colorectal cancer. (**Source:** *OHIP Bulletin July 7, 2008, #4477*).

Based on recommendations of the Ontario PET Steering Committee and the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) is funding:

- 5 PET clinical trials, and
- 2 PET registries, one for cancer patients, which includes 6 separate indications and one for cardiac patients.
- Ontario PET Access Program

Treatment Facility in Ontario	Treatment Facility Outside Ontario
<p>Obtained at No Cost if patient qualifies for one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clinical Trial 2. Registry 3. The Ontario PET Access Program 	<p>The FDG used by most Ontario PET centres is currently not approved by Health Canada for routine clinical use, but may be used for research purposes.</p> <p>Regulation 552.24.16 under the Ontario Health Insurance Act specifically excludes coverage for “an examination or procedure for the purpose of a research or survey program other than an assessment that is necessary to determine if an insured person is suitable for the program”.</p> <p>PET scans are NOT funded out of country.</p>

Do I Need a PET Scan?

Only your physician can determine if you need to be referred for a PET Scan.

How Can I Access a PET Scan?

If your physician decides that you should have a PET scan you may qualify for a clinical trail or a registry because of your medical condition. The physician may make a referral to a principal investigator of the appropriate clinical trail, or to the nuclear medicine department at the PET Registry Coordinating Centre for a registry study that matches your condition. Eligible patients can receive a PET scan at participating health sciences centres in Toronto, Hamilton, London, or Ottawa. The Northern Health Travel Grant is also available for Northern patients referred for a PET scan.

Ontario Cardiac PET Registry Study

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4477.pdf>

Ontario PET Clinical Trials

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4477.pdf>

If you do not qualify as a candidate for any of the clinical trials or registry studies, you may still be able to receive a PET scan in Ontario, through the Ontario PET Scan Access Program. Through this review process, a radiologist, a nuclear medicine physician, and an oncologist, determine whether you are an appropriate candidate for a PET scan. If you receive your PET scan under these circumstances OHIP will pay for it. There will be no charge to you.

Ontario PET Access Program

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4477.pdf>

If your medical condition does **NOT** qualify you for either a clinical trial, a Registry or the Ontario PET Scan Access Program your physician can still schedule you for a PET scan. However you will be responsible for the cost of the test.

DISCLAIMER: The purpose of this information is to increase public awareness about the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care – Out-of-Country Services. Any specific questions about PET scans or your health should be discussed with your physician.