

# Salivary Gland Scintigraphy: Advancing Diagnostic Precision in Salivary Gland Disorders



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Salivary gland scintigraphy is an invaluable diagnostic tool for evaluating the functional status of the salivary glands, particularly the parotid and submandibular glands. Utilizing  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$  pertechnetate, this technique allows for the visualization of glandular function, providing essential insights into various pathological conditions. Developed with a focus on improving diagnostic accuracy and patient outcomes, this procedure has become a cornerstone in nuclear medicine.

## Introduction to Salivary Gland Scintigraphy:

The selective uptake and secretion of  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$  pertechnetate by the salivary glands facilitate the assessment of glandular function, offering a distinct advantage over purely anatomical imaging methods. Unlike sublingual and minor salivary glands, the parotid and submandibular glands can be effectively evaluated, with the activity seen in the oral cavity attributed to radioactive saliva. To enhance diagnostic efficacy and reduce examination duration, citric acid or carbachol is administered to stimulate secretion, ensuring a comprehensive assessment within 20-30 minutes.

## Methodology and Guidelines:

Based on extensive scientific literature and international guidelines from EANM and SNMMI, the methodology for salivary gland scintigraphy is meticulously standardized. The process begins with intravenous administration of  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$  pertechnetate, followed by a stimulant to provoke maximum secretion. This dual approach ensures both accuracy and efficiency, making it a preferred method in cases where traditional imaging fails to provide conclusive results.

## Clinical Indications and Applications:

Salivary gland scintigraphy is particularly useful in diagnosing conditions such as unexplained glandular obstructions, traumatic abnormalities, post-surgical evaluations, and Sjogren's syndrome. It serves as an alternative to sialography, especially for patients sensitive to contrast agents or when ductal cannulation is unsuccessful. Furthermore, its utility extends to detecting glandular aplasia and assessing the functional impact of irradiation or high-dose  $^{131}\text{I}$  therapy.

## Comparative Advantages:

Unlike ultrasound or CT/MRI, which offer morphological insights, scintigraphy provides a dynamic assessment of glandular function. This physiological focus is crucial in cases where anatomical imaging cannot capture the extent of functional impairment. For example, in Sjogren's disease, scintigraphy reveals functional deficits that correlate with clinical stages, providing a more nuanced understanding of the disease's progression.

## Procedure and Patient Preparation:

Patient preparation is pivotal for accurate results. Patients must fast for at least two hours and discontinue anticholinergic medications 24 hours prior. During the procedure, the patient is positioned supine with anterior

gamma camera imaging, ensuring optimal visualization of the glands. Time-activity curves generated from the scans offer a quantitative measure of glandular function, essential for diagnosing and monitoring conditions like chronic inflammation and sialadenosis.

## Interpretation and Diagnostic Insights:

Interpretation of scintigraphic results involves analyzing uptake and secretion patterns. Reduced uptake may indicate chronic infections or obstructions, while increased uptake suggests sialadenosis or acute sialoadenitis. Notably, scintigraphy excels in evaluating functional asymmetries and providing objective evidence of glandular dysfunction in systemic conditions like Sjogren's disease. However, its role in tumor detection is limited to specific cases such as Warthin's tumor.


## Conclusion:

Salivary gland scintigraphy stands as a critical diagnostic modality, offering unparalleled insights into the functional status of the salivary glands. Its integration into clinical practice enhances diagnostic precision, guiding effective management of salivary gland disorders. As advancements continue, the role of scintigraphy in nuclear medicine is set to expand, cementing its place as a vital tool in comprehensive patient care.

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