

Bone density scanning (DEXA)

Patient information sheet

What is a DEXA scan?

DEXA stands for dual energy X-ray absorptiometry, also known as a bone density scan.

Why am I having a DEXA scan?

A DEXA scan is used to determine whether or not you have osteoporosis (thinning of the bones). If you do have osteoporosis, then lifestyle advice can be given to improve your bone health. Sometimes bone strengthening medicines are also advised.

Measurements are usually made at the hip and the spine. The machine uses X-rays but the radiation dose is extremely low, being equivalent to 1/10th of a chest X-ray, or approximately eight hours of background radiation.

Although the radiation dose is very low, we prefer not to do this scan if you are pregnant. If you are pregnant, please contact us and we will re-schedule the scan.

How do I prepare for my scan?

You may eat and drink as normal before the scan and may continue to take your usual prescription medication.

Do not take any calcium supplements or antacid medication that contain calcium carbonate (CaCO₃) e.g. Gaviscon on the day of your scan.

If you are taking Gastrografin, this needs to be stopped two weeks prior to your appointment.

Please contact us if you had a nuclear medicine, MRI, CT or X-ray study using oral or intravenous contrast in the two weeks before your DEXA scan appointment.

What happens during the scan?

When you come for your scan you will be asked to change into a hospital gown. Jewellery, piercings and bras will need to be removed.

You will be asked to lie flat on your back on a firm couch and your feet supported in the correct position for the scan. The scanner arm will move over your body taking an image of your spine and hips. It is an open scanner, and you will not be enclosed at all. The scan takes between 10-20 minutes to complete and does not hurt. The radiographer will remain in the room with you.

It is important to bring the completed questionnaire and a full list of current medications to your appointment.

After your scan

Your scan results will be sent to the doctor who referred you to us.

Please do not hesitate to contact the number provided below about any concerns you may have about this procedure.

If we are unable to take your call, please leave a voicemail message and a member of the team will return your call as soon as possible.

Contacts

For radiology bookings or to change or cancel an appointment, please call the radiology bookings office on: **01223 638808**. Office hours are Monday to Friday 09:00-16:30.

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