

Having a DEXA scan to check bone density

Department of Radiology

Information for Patients

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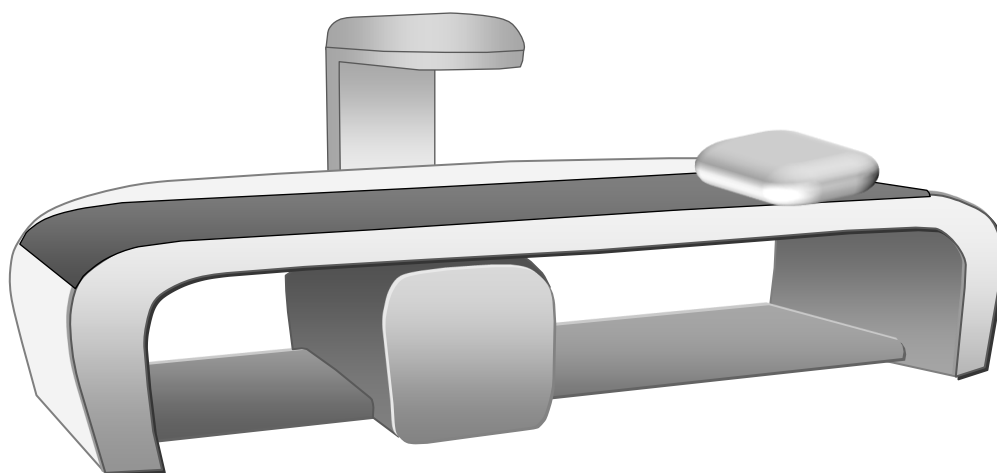
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Introduction

This leaflet tells you about your bone density scan, known as a DEXA scan (or also called a DXA scan). Please read it carefully as it contains important information.

Before your appointment please complete the questionnaire enclosed. If you do not get a questionnaire we can give you one to fill in when you arrive.

Patient appointments are booked every 20 minutes. If you are late we may need to rebook your appointment.



Further information about DEXA scans

For further information about DEXA scans visit the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/dexa-scan/

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Important information we will need to know

Before you attend your appointment for a bone density scan:

- **If you think there is a possibility that you might be pregnant**, please call the Radiology Department to arrange your appointment for when you can be certain you are not pregnant.
- **If you have had an X-ray examination in the last 3 weeks and were given an injection of a liquid that shows up on X-rays (X-ray contrast dye), or if you had an X-ray procedure where you had to drink barium liquid**, please call the Radiology Department to rearrange your DEXA scan appointment.
- **If you have had a bone density scan within the last 3 years** at any hospital, please call the Radiology Department to check if you need another scan.
- **If you need a translator**, please let us know in advance by phoning the number on your appointment letter.
- **If you use a wheelchair or need help to transfer onto the scan table**, please call the Radiology Department to let us know so we can book a longer appointment for you. It may be useful to bring someone with you who can help.
- **If you use a hoist to transfer**, please call the Radiology Department to let us know. **Due to the shape of the scan table we cannot hoist patients onto it.** We also cannot slide patients from a stretcher onto the scan table.
- **If you weigh over 150kg (24 stones)**, please call the Radiology Department to let us know. Different DEXA scanners have different weight limits. If you are over the weight limit for the scanner you are booked for, we may not be able to do your scan.

You can call the Radiology Department on 0116 258 8765 (option 8) - Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, excluding bank holidays

What is a bone density (DEXA) scan?

A bone density scan uses a special type of X-ray called **dual energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA)**. The scan is done on the lower back (lumbar spine), hips and sometimes the lower half of the arm (forearm). These areas are better at showing bone ageing on DEXA scans.

The X-rays pass from the scanner through your body and onto X-ray detectors. The computer looks at how many X-rays reach the detectors and can assess the bone mineral content and density of your bones. The results give an idea of your risk of developing osteoporosis or breaking (fracturing) a bone in the future.

The scan does not involve going into any form of tunnel.

The scan does not take long and does not hurt.

You will need to stay still for 5 to 10 minutes.

Why do I need a bone density scan?

A bone density scan is used to assess your risk of osteoporosis.

As we get older our bones lose density. It is normal to have some loss of density as we get older. But some people are more at risk of getting a health condition called osteoporosis, that weakens bones by reducing their density and makes them more likely to break. You might be at higher risk of getting osteoporosis if someone else in your family had it, if you are on certain medications, or if you have certain other long term health conditions.

Doctors use the results of bone density scans to help them decide whether treatment for low bone density is needed.

How do I get ready for the scan?

- All metal objects from the area being scanned will need to be removed.
- **If possible, wear clothes that do not have metal zips, fasteners, studs, hooks or buttons; otherwise these clothes will need to be removed from the area being scanned and you may need to wear a hospital gown.**
- Avoid wearing girdles or suspenders that have metal supports or clips.
- If possible, avoid wearing a bra that has under wires or hooks to do it up.
- You will need to stand to have your height and weight measured before you have the scan.

What happens during the scan?

- In the scan room you will be asked some questions about your medical history.
- For a scan of your spine we will ask you to lie with your legs raised on a cushion. For a scan of your hip you will have your legs flat on the table.
- During the scan a scanning arm will move above your lower back and hips. It will make a sound while it moves.
- Once you are in the right position each scan takes about 1 minute to perform. You may need to have more than one part of your body scanned.

How long will the scan take?

Your appointment is 20 minutes but the scan itself will take about 5 to 10 minutes.

You will need to be able to lie flat and keep still for at least 5 minutes so that the images are not blurred. If you are concerned about this, please call 0116 258 8765 (option 8) for advice.

What happens after my scan?

Once the scan is done you can go home.

How do I get the results?

The results will not be given to you straight away. A report will be sent to the GP or doctor who referred you for the scan. The radiographer who performs your scan will make sure that you know how and when to get your results.

The report will tell your doctor whether your bone density is normal, slightly lower than normal (osteopenic) or low bone density (osteoporotic). It will also give suggestions for treatment where appropriate.

What level of radiation will I be exposed to from this scan?

Bone density scans are very safe. They use a much lower level of radiation than standard X-rays, which means the radiographer can stay in the scanning room with you during the scan. The amount of X-rays you are exposed to for the majority of DEXA scans is less than what you would receive in other types of X-rays such as a chest or spine X-ray.

We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day of our lives. This comes from the sun, the food we eat, the ground and environment. Each examination which uses X-rays gives a dose on top of this natural background radiation. The radiation you get from a bone density scan is equivalent to about 1 day of natural background radiation.

The benefits of this scan are likely to outweigh any potential risk. The risk from not having the scan could be greater. We follow all safeguarding procedures to minimise the amount of X-rays you receive.

What if I need to talk to someone?



If you have any questions or concerns, or cannot make your appointment, please contact the Radiology Department on 0116 258 8765 (option 8) - Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, excluding bank holidays.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk