

Having a DEXA scan to check bone density

Department of Radiology

Information for Patients

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Introduction

This leaflet tells you about the bone density scan. This is sometimes called a DEXA scan or DXA. Please read it carefully as it has important information.

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

Patients are booked every 15 to 20 minutes. If you are late we may need to rebook your appointment.

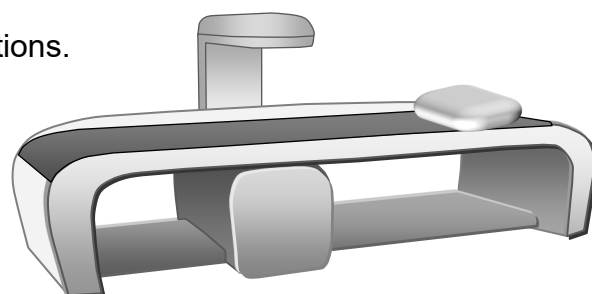
Why do I need a bone density scan?

As we get older our bones lose density. It is normal to have some loss of density as we get older.

Some people are more at risk of getting a health condition called osteoporosis. This weakens bones by reducing their density. This makes them more likely to break. You may be at higher risk of getting osteoporosis if:

- someone else in your family had it,
- you are on certain medicines,
- you have certain other long term health conditions.

Your doctor wants to find out your risk of osteoporosis. They will use the results of your bone density scan to help them decide if you need medicines to treat low bone density.



The DEXA scan table

**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 about you

Before you attend your appointment you must call the radiology department and let us know:

- **If you think that there is a chance that you may be pregnant.** We can rebook your appointment for when you can be certain you are not pregnant.
- **If you had another X-ray test in the last 3 weeks and were given 1 or both of:**
 - in injection of a liquid that shows up on X-rays (contrast)
 - a drink of liquid that shows up on X-rays (barium or water soluble contrast).
- **If you have had a bone density scan within the last 3 years** at any hospital. We will check if you need another scan.
- **If you need a translator.**
- **If you use a wheelchair or need help to transfer onto the scan table.** We will book a longer appointment. It may be useful to bring someone with you who can help.
- **If you use a hoist to transfer.** We will book a longer appointment.
- **If you weigh over 160Kg (25 stones),** please call the radiology department to let us know. Different DEXA scanners have different weight limits. If you are too big 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, but not on 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)**.
- For most patients we scan 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. We will not scan your lower back or hip if you have had an operation to put metal in the bone.
- For some patients we scan the whole back (spine) to look at the alignment. In rare cases, we scan the whole body to look at the muscles, fat and bone. We only do these scans if the doctor asked for it.
- 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. It can find out the bone mineral content and density of your bones.
- The results give an idea of your risk of getting osteoporosis or breaking (fracturing) a bone in the future.
- You will not need to go into any tunnel for the scan.
- The scan does not take long and does not hurt.
- You will need to stay still for 5 to 10 minutes.

How do I get ready for the scan?

- You must take off all metal objects from the area being scanned. This includes:
 - clothes with metal zips, fasteners, studs, hooks or buttons
 - girdles or suspenders that have metal supports or clips.
 - bra that has under-wires or hooks to do it up
- We will give you a hospital gown to wear if needed.
- We will measure your height and weight before you have the scan. You will need to stand on the measuring scales. If you cannot stand, please be ready to tell us your weight.

What happens during a bone density scan?

- In the scan room we will ask you some questions about your medical history. We will check the answers you have put on your DEXA questionnaire.
- Our bones form over a long time. Hormones play an important part. Please tell us if the gender you identify as is different to the sex organs (ovaries or testes) you were born with inside your body. We also need to know if you have had sex hormone treatment and how long for. This is important. The scanner will compare your bone density to results from people with similar age, height, ethnicity and gender. We need to decide whether the scanner should compare your bone density to males or females, or give results for both.
- 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.
- When you are in the right position each scan takes about 1 minute to do. You may need to have more than one part of your body scanned.

How long will the scan take?

Your appointment is 15 to 20 minutes. 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.

How do I get the results?

You will not get the results straight away.

We will send your scan report to the GP or doctor who wanted you to have this scan

After your scan we will tell you who the results will go to and how 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 if needed.



What happens after my scan?

You can go home. You can eat and drink as usual.

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. The amount of X-rays you are exposed to for most DEXA scans is less other types of X-rays such as X-rays of your chest or back (spine).

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

We must ask all patients age 10 to 15 years registered female and all patients aged 16 to 55 years about their periods and/or possibility of being pregnant.

The benefits of this test are likely to outweigh any possible risks. The risk from not having the test could be greater. We try to keep your exposure to X-rays as low as possible.

What if I need to talk to someone?



If you have any questions or concerns, or cannot make the appointment:

Please call the Radiology department on **0116 258 8765** and select **option 8**. Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, but not on bank holidays.

Other sources of information about DEXA scans:

Simply search Bone density DEXA scan on NHS website for more information:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dexa-scan/>

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 ਵਿਚ 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

Previous reference:

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