



Your DEXA Scan

Your doctor has referred you for a Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry (DEXA) Scan. The information in this leaflet will explain what will happen before, during, and after this test and also answer any questions that you may have.

What is a DEXA Scan?

A DEXA scan is the best way to measure bone density. It is the most accurate and reliable way of assessing the strength of your bones and their risk of fracture. The scanner uses X-rays, which pass through the bone and soft tissue at your hip and lumbar spine (lower back). The X-rays are detected by the scanner which then calculates your bone mineral density. This is then compared to the average bone density of others the same age and sex as yourself. This will help your doctor to decide what advice and treatment, if any, is necessary to help prevent your bones from fracturing in the future.

Are there any risks?

Although DEXA uses X-rays, this is at a very low dose and any risks are negligible.

Before your DEXA Scan

If you have any of the following conditions, a DEXA scan may not be suitable;

- severe mobility problems
- if you are unable to lie flat for a few minutes
- if you are pregnant, or think you may be
- if your weight exceeds 120 kg (19 stones)
- if you have had a recent fracture and are still in a cast (plaster) and this is affecting your mobility
- if you have ever had surgery on your spine or hip (eg hip replacement).

If any of the above apply please contact us as soon as possible. You will find our telephone number on your appointment letter.

You will be sent a **Patient Questionnaire** with your appointment letter, **which you should fill in, as completely as you can, and bring with you when you come for your scan.** This asks questions about your lifestyle, diet, and medical history and is used to help plan any treatment or advice.

Please bring a list of any medication prescribed by your doctor with you.

When you come for your scan, you should try to wear clothes that have no metal or plastic at the hips or along the spine (eg zips, bras, buckles, buttons and studs). You will then be able to have the scan in your own clothes rather than having to change into a hospital gown.

What will happen during the scan?

You will be asked to lie on a firm couch while the scanner arm passes over you. You will not be in a tunnel, although the scanner arm may pass near your face. You will **not** need to have an injection. The scan will take around 15 minutes. The radiographer will be in the room with you during the scan.

Does it hurt?

The scan itself is painless. However, you will need to lie flat during the scan, which some patients find uncomfortable.

When will I get my results?

You will not get your results on the day of the scan. The results are provided by a rheumatologist (a doctor who specialises in joint problems), who will then send a report to the doctor that referred you for your scan. This should take between 2 to 4 weeks. If you were referred by a hospital consultant, your GP will also receive a copy of the report.

Who should I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about your scan or the information in this leaflet you should contact the Department of Medical Imaging. You will find our number on your appointment letter.