

Bone Density Scan

Information sheet

What is a DEXA/Bone Mineral Density Scan?

DEXA (Dual-Energy X-ray Absorptiometry) scan, also referred to as a Bone Mineral Density (BMD) scan, is a test to measure the density of your bones. When bones are getting thinner, the risk of having a fracture increases.

A DEXA scan is a test that identifies those at risk of developing osteoporosis, and those who have the condition and need monitoring.

A DEXA scan is a simple test that uses a small dose of radiation that passes through your bones. The amount of radiation you will receive is very low (equivalent to a few hours of natural background radiation).

What to do before the scan?

You can remain fully clothed, but please wear light and loose clothing without metal (zips, buttons, belts, underwired bras, as well as any nipple and belly button piercings.). Please let us know if you had any recent scans with contrast e.g. barium studies, or isotope injections in the last seven days as we may need to reschedule your scan. This is to allow the contrast used in the previous examination to pass out of your body.

We will also send a questionnaire that needs to be filled in before you come to your appointment. Please try your best to answer these questions as they are used to customise your report. If you cannot complete the questions, the radiographer in the DEXA scan will be able to help you.

What does the procedure involve?

When you arrive at Radiology reception you will be checked in and directed to the DEXA waiting area. Our staff will ask about your questionnaire and might ask for additional information regarding your health or medications.

You might be asked to change into a hospital gown, if necessary. We will ask you to lie in your back on a couch. The scan will take about 15-30 minutes. You will not go through a tunnel, but a scanning arm passes above your hip area and lower abdomen. We might also do additional measurements of your forearm or whole spine (Vertebral Fracture Assessment) if required.



image courtesy of Keele University www.erohub.co.uk

Are DEXA scan suitable for all patients?

Not everyone is able to have a DEXA scan. Patients are only referred for a DEXA scan if they have risk factors such as age, family history and medical history for developing osteoporosis or fractures. A bone density scan is not done to provide information about cancer, arthritis (including osteoarthritis) or causes of pain.

The majority of scans are done to identify patients at risk without the need for follow-up scans. If a follow-up scan is needed, we advise at least a two-year interval between scans, as changes in bone mineral density over shorter intervals may be smaller than the measurement error of the procedure. Patients should have follow-up scans on the same machine as their initial scan wherever possible, as we are unable to compare scans for change if they are done on different machines.

Patients who may be pregnant should not be scanned as the test involves radiation. If you are pregnant, please let us know and we will rearrange your appointment.

Patients need to be able to climb onto the couch unaided as the table does not move up and down. Patients who have bilateral hip replacements and/or spinal metalwork will not be able to have the scan. Please let us know if you have any of these prior to the scan. replacements.

What will happen after the scan?

A consultant or reporting radiographer will report your scan and the report will be sent back to the doctor who requested the scan.

Please note that the radiographer undertaking your DEXA scan is unable to comment on your

How long does the result take?

The results will take about 2-4 weeks to get back to the doctor who requested the scan.

Can I bring a friend or relative with me?

You can bring a friend or a relative with you. However, they will not be able to accompany you into the DEXA scanning room due to the limited space of the room.

Contact us

Please contact the department if you have any specific requirements so we can ensure support is in place.

If you have any queries or require further information, please call radiology:

01342 414249

Monday to Friday

9am–5pm

If you'd like to find out how you can support QVH, please visit www.supportqvh.org



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