

DEXA scan

Radiology Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is for people having a DEXA scan. It gives information on the scan, and the benefits and risks of the procedure.

What is a DEXA scan?

The scan is the most common test to measure your bone density and is suggested if you are at increased risk of osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a disease where the bones have reduced density so are at increased risk of fracturing (breaking).

The DEXA scan uses X-rays to identify weak bones before they fracture which then gives you the opportunity to strengthen them.

How is it carried out?

A DEXA scan is a quick and painless procedure. You will need to lie on your back on an X-ray table so that an area of your body can be scanned (please see figure 1 for a picture of the scanning machine).



Figure 1 shows a DEXA scanning machine

During the scan, a large scanning arm is passed over your body to measure bone density in the centre of the skeleton. As the scanning arm is moved slowly over your body, a narrow beam of low dose X-rays will be passed through the part of your body being examined.

What are the benefits of the scan?

Osteoporosis often does not cause any symptoms until a bone is broken. By using a scanning technique such as DEXA, we can measure bone density and identify those at risk of developing osteoporosis before someone gets a fracture.

What are the risks of a DEXA scan?

The scan is painless and not unpleasant. The dose of radiation is extremely small (equivalent to one tenth of a standard chest X-ray).

You should not have this test performed if:

- You are **pregnant** or think you might be pregnant. If you are not sure, a pregnancy test will be offered.
- You have had an X-ray examination using **contrast dye** within the last three to four weeks, such as a barium enema or barium swallow.
- You have had a CT or MRI scan using **oral contrast dye** within the last two weeks.
- You have had a **nuclear medicine scan** in the past two weeks, such as a bone or thyroid scan.

Please let the department know as soon as possible if you have had a previous DEXA scan in the last two years.

What are the alternatives?

There are no alternatives to this test. However, if you do not want the scan, you can choose not to have it. Please contact us as soon as possible if you do not want the scan.

How do I prepare for the scan?

- You can eat and drink as normal before the scan.
- **If you take calcium supplements, do not take them for 48 hours before the scan.**
- Do not wear clothes with metal buttons or zips around the spine or hips such as jeans. Avoid wearing girdles and underwired bras. You do not usually have to remove clothing.
- If you have had any hip or back surgery, tell the radiographer before your scan.

What happens at the scan?

- We will measure your weight and height.
- You then lie flat on your back on a couch as a scanner moves over the area to be tested.
- Both hips and the lower spine are usually scanned as these bones most commonly fracture in osteoporosis. Your forearm may also be scanned.
- You do not lie in a tunnel or receive an injection.

The whole procedure lasts no longer than 20 minutes.

What happens with the results?

The results are interpreted by a specialist and then transferred to the doctor who referred you for the test. We will advise you about booking an appointment to receive these results. At this appointment, the doctor will tell you the results and suggest any treatment, if necessary.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following weblink:

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/DEXA-scan/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Imaging Department at Corbett Hospital Outpatient Centre on 01384 244786 (9.30am to 3.30pm, Monday to Friday)

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/radiology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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