

Having a DXA scan (Dual Energy X– Ray Absorptiometry)

Patient leaflet

**If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format
please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.**

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید،
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie,
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

Introduction

This information aims to answer your questions about having a Dual energy X - Ray Absorptiometry Scan (DXA scan). It explains the benefits and risks as well as what you can expect when you come to the hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to your referrer or the Radiographer or Assistant Practitioner performing your scan.

What is a DXA scan?

A DXA scan, also called a bone density scan, is a quick and painless procedure that measures your bone mineral density (how strong your bones are). The scan is like a standard x-ray, but it uses a special type of x-ray technology called 'dual energy x-ray absorptiometry', as this is more effective in identifying low bone mineral density. If you have a lower bone density than the average for your age, you may be more at risk of developing osteoporosis (a health condition that can weaken bones and may make them more likely to break).

How does a DXA scan work?

The DXA scan machine will x-ray certain parts of your body. Special detectors in the DXA scan machine will measure how much x-ray radiation passes through your bones. From this, we can calculate the density of your bones (how strong your bones are). Your bone density measurements will then be compared with the bone density of a young, healthy adult and an adult of your own age, gender and ethnicity.



What to expect

Why have I been referred for this scan?

You have been referred for a DXA scan because your doctor thinks you may be at risk of breaking bones. The results from your DXA scan will help the doctor who referred you for this scan to decide whether you need treatment to help strengthen your bones, and if you do, what type of treatment will work best for you.

How should I prepare for the scan?

Clothing - You should wear loose, comfortable clothing to your appointment. Please avoid wearing clothing that has metal in / on it, such as an underwired bra with hook and eyes, heavily studded jeans and items of clothing which may have any form of beading or embellishments on, as these can interfere with the scan.

Please leave all jewellery and valuables at home as you may be asked to remove these for your examination.

If you have had other tests in the last 2 weeks

Please contact us before your appointment if you have had any of the following investigations as we may need to rearrange your scan for a later date:

- Nuclear Medicine Scan
- CT Scan with dye
- Barium X– Ray
- Silogram
- ERCP (performed in Gastroenterology Unit)

Before your appointment

Please contact the department if you have had a DXA scan within the last two years as you may not need another or we may need to plan your scan for a date in the future.

If you are a wheelchair user, please contact us before your appointment if you think you will need a hoist to help you get up onto the scanning table (approximately 0.7m tall) from your wheelchair. We will need to check that a hoist is available on the day of your appointment.

Pregnancy

If you are, or think you could be pregnant, please contact us prior to your appointment on the phone number in your appointment letter.

What to expect

What will happen before the scan?

Before the scan, we will check some details with you. We may also ask you:

- Some questions about your medical history.
- To fill out the DXA scan pre-appointment questionnaire.
- To measure your height and weight.
- To remove items of clothing if they contain any metal that may interfere with the scan (we will provide you with a hospital gown to change into, if necessary).

The scan will be performed by a Radiographer or an Assistant Practitioner (both health professionals that produce images used to diagnose and treat illnesses).

What will happen during the scan?

We will ask you to lie on your back on a scanning table. We will also give you a pillow to place under your head. The DXA scan machine has an arm that hangs over the scanning table, so you will not go through a tunnel or be enclosed in a small space at any time. We will ask you to keep still when the scanning arm moves along the areas being scanned (usually your spine and hips). Each scan will take a couple of minutes. The Radiographer or Assistant Practitioner will remain in the room with you during your scan. Please allow approximately 20 minutes in total for your appointment.

What will happen after the scan?

After the scan, you will be able to return to your normal daily activities straightaway.

Are there any potential risks or complications?

DXA scans are very safe with no real risk of complications. This is because the amount of radiation used in DXA scans is very low (equivalent to a few hours of natural background radiation). Despite being very safe, DXA scans and x-rays are not recommended for pregnant individuals, as x-rays can damage an unborn child.

Finally

The pictures taken during the examination are studied carefully and a detailed report is produced. The results will be sent to the person who referred you for the test. They will discuss the results with you and any treatment you may need.

You may already have an appointment with the team who referred you. If not, please contact them to arrange one to discuss the results of this test.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to call the Radiology Department via the number given on your appointment letter.

As this is a teaching hospital there may be students and observers present during your examination as part of their ongoing training. Please let the staff know if you do not wish any students to be present during your attendance.

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