

Bone Densitometry (DXA) Scan

The Radiology Department

The Radiology Department carries out radiological examinations of patients using X-ray equipment, DXA, ultrasound, computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

There is a multidisciplinary team of radiologists (doctors who have been specially trained in radiology), radiographers, assistant practitioners, radiology nurses and assistants and clerical staff.

What is a bone densitometry (DXA) scan?

A bone densitometry scan (dual energy X-ray absorptiometry or DXA scan) uses X-ray equipment and a computer to measure bone density.

Everyone's bones become less dense as they grow older but this natural process may be accelerated leading to **osteoporosis**. Osteoporosis is a thinning of the bones which makes them more likely to fracture (break). Areas most affected are the spine, hips and wrists. In the UK, osteoporosis affects approximately 1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men.

Some contributing factors of osteoporosis are:

- Early menopause.
- Hysterectomy.
- Regular use of steroids.
- Thyroid problems.
- Low calcium intake.
- Heavy smoking.
- Heavy drinking.

Are there any risks from the procedure?

This procedure involves the use of ionising radiation. The risks are very low and are outweighed by the benefits of having the scan.

What are the benefits of the procedure?

The bone densitometry results will help your doctor decide if any treatment plans are needed in order for good bone health to be maintained.

Before your appointment date, please phone us if:

- you are or think you may be **pregnant**.
- you have an appointment for a procedure that requires you to receive any radiological contrast (dye), either swallowed or injected, such as a barium swallow examination, a nuclear medicine scan involving injection of a radioisotope, a CT or MRI contrast scan, an

angiogram or similar. You may need to wait up to 10 days following these examinations before you can have a DXA scan.

- you have any difficulty with mobility which may prevent you getting onto the scanner table.
- you are unable to lie still on the scan table for any length of time.
- you have a weight of 32 stone (204 kg) or more.

Can I bring a friend/relative with me?

Yes, you may be accompanied, but usually friends and relatives are not allowed in the examination room.

On the day of your procedure

- When you arrive, please go to the Radiology Department on the ground floor and book in at reception.
- You will be required to undress and wear a hospital gown for your scan.
- Please wear plain underwear without any metallic/plastic embellishments.
- Your height and weight will also be measured before the scan.

What happens during the procedure?

You will be asked to lie on the scanner table. During the scan a mechanical arm moves above the areas to be examined, usually the lower back and left hip. You can breathe normally but should keep as still as possible. The radiographer will remain in the room with you throughout the examination.

How long will it take?

On average, the whole examination takes around 20 minutes.

Are there any side effects?

No.

Can you eat and drink before and after?

Yes, you can do so normally.

When will I get the results?

The results of your scan will be sent to your referring doctor who will discuss them with you at your next appointment.

If I have any questions, who should I contact?

If you have any questions or concerns, you can call the Radiology Department. Please see overleaf.

If you are unable to attend your appointment, please let us know at least 48 hours beforehand by contacting the Radiology Department on 01992 823153.

Useful contact details

East and North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust:

- Website www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk
- Telephone 01438 314333

Radiology Department, Hertford County Hospital:

- Telephone 01992 823153 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm)

Leaflet information

**You can request this information in a different format or another language;
please speak to your doctor or nurse.**

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