

Patient information factsheet

Having a DXA scan

We have given you this factsheet because you have an appointment for a DXA scan. It explains what a DXA scan is, what the scan involves and how to prepare for your appointment. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

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 or an adult of your own age, gender and ethnicity.

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?

Questionnaire

Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this factsheet and bring it with you to your appointment.

Clothing

You should wear loose, comfortable clothing to your appointment. Please avoid wearing clothes that have metal in them, such as an underwired bra or heavily studded jeans, and jewellery, as these can interfere with the x-ray scan.

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If you have had a scan in the last two weeks

Please contact us before your appointment if you have had an isotope scan or a barium x-ray in the last two weeks. We may need to rearrange your scan for a later date.

If you have had a DXA scan within the last year

Please contact us as soon as you receive your appointment letter. You may not need to have another DXA scan.

If your appointment is not convenient

Please contact us as soon as you receive your appointment letter to rearrange your appointment.

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.

If you are pregnant

X-rays can damage an unborn child. If you know or think you might be pregnant, or are currently breastfeeding, please contact us for advice as soon as you receive your appointment letter.

Hospital transport

Please contact us as soon as you receive your appointment letter if you will be travelling to your appointment using the ambulance service and you have been given an afternoon appointment. We will need to reschedule this, so you have a morning appointment.

We are unable to book hospital transport for you. Please contact your GP to arrange this for you.

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
- you to fill out the DXA scan pre-appointment questionnaire (if you have not already done so)
- to measure your height and weight
- you 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 one of our DXA technicians in our osteoporosis centre.

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.

A DXA technician will remain in the room with you during your scan.

Please allow approximately 20 minutes in total for your appointment.

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What will happen after the scan?

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

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 women, as x-rays can damage an unborn child.

When will I receive my results?

The results from your scan will be sent to the doctor who referred you for the scan, usually within two to three weeks. Your doctor will then contact you about your results.

Are there any alternatives?

DXA scans are the best way to assess a person's bone density. Unlike ordinary x-rays, DXA scans can measure tiny reductions in bone density. This makes it possible to diagnose osteoporosis in its early stages, before you break a bone.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns before your appointment, please contact us.

Osteoporosis centre

Telephone: **023 8120 4696**

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/dexa-scan

patient.info/bones-joints-muscles/osteoporosis-leaflet/dexa-scan

www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteoporosis

www.theros.org.uk

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

DXA scan pre-appointment questionnaire

Please complete the questionnaire below and bring it with you to your appointment.

Name (please print): _____ Date of birth: _____

Question	Please tick your answer	
Is there a chance that you could be pregnant?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you had a barium x-ray in the last two weeks?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you had a nuclear medicine scan or injection of an x-ray dye in the last week?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

If you answered 'yes' to any of the questions above, please call us on **023 8120 4696**.

Question	Please tick your answer	
Have you ever had a bone density scan? If you answered 'yes', when and where did you have the scan? If you had the scan less than a year ago, please contact us, as you may not need another scan. _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you on any medication for osteoporosis? If you answered 'yes', which medication(s)? _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you ever broken a bone? If you answered 'yes', which bone(s) and at what age did you break it? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have either of your parents ever broken a hip?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you smoke?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you ever taken a course of steroids, such as prednisolone, for more than three months?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

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<p>Do you drink alcohol?</p> <p>If you answered 'yes', how many units do you drink per week on average?</p> <hr/> <p>Unit examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 pint of standard strength beer or 1 standard glass of wine (175ml) = 2.3 units • 1 small glass of wine (125ml) = 1.6 units • A single measure of spirits (25ml) = 1 unit 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<p>Have you ever been diagnosed with any of the following conditions?</p> <p>If you answered 'yes', please tick the relevant boxes below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rheumatoid arthritis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> An eating disorder (for example, anorexia)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Breast cancer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Liver disease</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chronic kidney disease</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Osteogenesis imperfecta (OI)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Epilepsy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hyperparathyroidism</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cystic fibrosis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Malabsorption diseases (for example, coeliac disease, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and inflammatory bowel disease)</p> <p>If you have any other medical conditions not listed, please let us know below:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Men only</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prostate cancer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male hypogonadism or low testosterone</p> <p>Women only</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Premature menopause</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Amenorrhoea for more than six months</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Turner syndrome</p> <p>Please could you also answer the following questions: How old were you when you first started your period?</p> <hr/> <p>At what age did you reach the menopause?</p> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

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For office use only

Scan on?	A / B
Pregnant?	Yes / No
Weight (kg)	
Height (cm)	
Support box	None / Low / Medium / High
Scan mode	HD / Array / Fast Array / Express
Metal in hip?	Right / Left / Both / None
VFA indicated?	Yes / No Reason? _____ _____ _____
Next OPA	
DAP (cGy.cm²)	
Operator	
Date	

Scan comments

RFN	R Total	LFN	L Total	Spine
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