



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Bone Density Scan (DXA)

Issued by Radiology

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[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

A DXA scan is a special type of x-ray that measures bone density. DXA stands for dual energy x-ray absorptiometry.

DXA scans also known as DEXA scans, bone density scans or bone densitometry scans are most commonly used to diagnose osteoporosis (where the bones become weak and fragile making them more likely to break), they can also be used to assess the risk of osteoporosis developing. A DXA bone scan can also help detect other bone related conditions such as osteopenia (low bone mineral density) and osteomalacia (softening of the bones due to vitamin deficiency).

## Osteoporosis

You may need to have a DXA scan if you are at risk of developing osteoporosis. Osteoporosis can affect people of both sexes and all ages, although older, post-menopausal women are particularly at risk. This is because after the menopause the level of the hormone oestrogen falls, resulting in a decrease of bone density. The denser your bones the stronger and less likely they are to break (fracture). Osteoporosis does not cause any symptoms until a bone is broken.

## Patient questionnaire

As appointment times are limited please make time to complete the patient questionnaire given to you with this appointment before you attend. It is important to bring the completed questionnaire with you when you attend for the appointment as this enables the bone density team to provide a more detailed and accurate report and treatment plan if needed.

## The scan

During the DXA scan which takes about ten minutes, x-rays will pass through your body. It is not painful and does not involve being in an enclosed space like an MRI scanner. You will be asked to lie on your back with no more than two pillows whilst the scan is carried out. Please let us know if you cannot do this.

## All patients

Please, if possible, wear loose clothing with no metal i.e. no under wire or long line bras, no full body corsets.

## Female patients

Despite being a safe procedure, DXA scans are not recommended if you are pregnant as x-rays are not considered safe to use during pregnancy because they can cause damage to the unborn child.

## Results

You will not be given any results at this appointment. Your results will be sent to your referring clinician or GP. Please allow four weeks for this to happen then contact your referrer's secretary or GP surgery. They will advise you if you need to make an appointment to discuss your scan results and further treatment plan if necessary.

If you have any further queries please contact the Rheumatology secretaries on 0191 293 4150.

## Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

## Other sources of information

### NHS 111

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 01670 511098

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

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