



**Royal National
Orthopaedic Hospital**
NHS Trust



A Patient's guide to the

Having a DXA scan

Having a DXA scan at RNOH

This leaflet explains more about having a DXA scan including the benefits, risks and any alternatives. It also provides information on what you can expect when you come to hospital.

What is a DXA scan?

DXA stands for Dual-Energy X-ray Absorptiometry. A DXA scan is a painless procedure that uses low dose x-rays and a computer to measure the density (strength) of your bones. The measurements are typically taken from your lower spine and hips as these areas show early signs of bone loss.

The scan is carried out by a radiographer. We are more than happy to answer any questions you may have.



Will I be shut in the scanner?

The bone density scanner is quite open with a narrow scanning arm supported over the table. You will not lie in a tunnel and the radiographer is present in the room during the scan.

Why do I need this scan?

From the information collected during the scan, we can tell whether you have osteoporosis (porous bones).

This condition can lead to an increased risk of broken bones.

Osteoporosis has few symptoms until a bone is broken. A DXA test can diagnose osteoporosis before this happens; giving you the chance to make lifestyle changes and/or take treatments which will help reduce the chances of breaking a bone. For patients with known osteoporosis, DXA scans can monitor the results of any treatments or lifestyle changes.

Are there any alternatives to this test?

If you wish to discuss any possible alternatives to this test, please speak to your doctor who referred you for this scan.

What are the risks with this test?

Radiation dose

With modern x-ray equipment, the radiation dose given is very low and the associated risks are extremely minimal. There are very strict working practices by which we are legally obliged to abide. The dose given during the scan is similar in strength to other sources of natural radiation that people are exposed to everyday without even realising it. The radiology staff are responsible for making sure that your dose is kept as low as practicable and that the benefits of having the DXA scan outweigh any risks.

Complications

There are no complications associated with this test.

Pregnancy

If you are or think you might be pregnant, please contact the department, before you come for your appointment.

Breast feeding

If you are breast feeding, or have been in the last six months, please contact the department.

What do I need to do to prepare?

You may eat and drink as normal. You do not need to take any additional medication prior to your scan.

Clothes

We ask that you do not wear any clothes with metal fastenings or decoration (such as belts) although trouser zips and under-wired bras are usually okay.

Relatives and escorts

You may bring a friend or relative with you to the x-ray department when you have your scan, although they will not normally be allowed into the examination room.

Children

Unfortunately we are unable to offer childcare facilities. If you need to bring your children with you, please bring along an adult who can supervise them while your examination is being done.

If you are unable to stand unassisted or cannot lie flat you must contact the department before you come for your appointment.

Please note that the weight restriction for this procedure is 22 stone or 140kg. If your weight exceeds this please contact the department before you come for your appointment.

What happens when I arrive?

Your appointment is in the Metabolic unit in the Stanmore site. There is no reception in the Metabolic unit, please take a seat in the waiting area and a radiographer will call you.

There is no need to change into a gown unless the radiographer feels this is necessary.

What does the scan involve?

On arrival in the scanning room, the radiographer will measure your height and weight in order for the computer to accurately calculate your bone density. You may also be asked a series of relevant questions so that the radiographer can provide an informative and accurate report for your clinician.

You lie on your back for the duration of the scan (about 15 minutes). During the scan, the scanner arm will pass over your lower spine and hips several times. While it is important that you stay still during the scan you will not have to hold your breath.

What happens after my scan?

After the scan you are free to go home and eat and drink as normal. The scan will not affect your ability to drive or operate machinery.

Once your scan is completed it is processed and analysed. A report will be sent to the doctor who referred you. Please allow 3-5 weeks before making your follow-up appointment (unless you are going to outpatients, where the results will be ready for the doctors to review).

What if I am taking medication?

You may take your medication as prescribed.

Contact us

What if I have any further questions? Please do not hesitate to ask any questions before, during or after your procedure or contact us by telephone on **0203 947 0040**.

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

Telephone: **020 8909 5439 (PALS)**

Email: **rnoh.pals@nhs.net**

Telephone: **020 8909 5717 / 5439 / 5741** (complaints)

Email: **rnoh.complaints@nhs.net**

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

Telephone: **020 8909 5439**

Email: **rnoh.pals@nhs.net**

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

Telephone: **111**

If you would like this leaflet translated into another language/large print, please contact the Quality Team on 020 8909 5439.

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