

Bone Density Scan (DEXA)

Measuring the strength of your bones

What it is

A short, painless scan that measures how much mineral is in your bones, usually at the hip and lower spine. It uses a **very small amount of X-ray** — far less than a chest X-ray. You lie on a padded table for about 10 to 15 minutes while an arm passes over you. Nothing touches you and nothing goes into you.

Before the scan

- **Do not take calcium supplements for 24 hours before** the scan — undissolved tablets in the gut can show up and distort the spine reading.
- Wear **loose clothes with no metal** — no zips, hooks, buttons or metal in the waistband. You may be asked to change into a gown.
- Remove jewellery, belts and coins from your pockets.
- **Tell them if you have had a recent scan with contrast dye or a nuclear scan** — you may need to wait a week.
- **Tell them if you are or might be pregnant.**

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESULT

The report gives a **T-score**:

–1.0 or above — normal bone

Between –1.0 and –2.5 — bone is thinner than ideal (osteopenia)

–2.5 or below — osteoporosis

The score is only part of the picture. Your age, past fractures, family history, steroid use, smoking and your risk of falling matter just as much. **A person with a mildly low score who falls often may need more treatment than someone with a worse score who does not.** We decide together.

REPEAT SCANS

Bone changes slowly. A repeat scan is usually done **after 1 to 2 years**, and it should ideally be on the **same machine**, because different machines are not directly comparable. Keep your report safely.

Search: DEXA, bone density, BMD, T score, osteoporosis scan

