

DEXA

Patient Information Leaflet



This patient information leaflet aims to answer your questions about undergoing your DEXA scan here at Heath Lodge Clinic.

What is a DEXA scan?

- DEXA scanning uses a very low-dose X-Ray technique to measure bone density and is the gold standard for diagnosis of low bone mass/osteoporosis.
- DEXA stands for dual energy X-Ray absorptiometry which is just a description of how results are obtained. DEXA scanning can also be referred to as DXA or bone densitometry.
- A DEXA scan is a quick and painless procedure that involves lying on your back on an X-Ray table. A scanning arm will move up your body to measure bone density of relevant bones. These are hip and spine as they are the sites where bone turnover occurs the soonest.
- Bone that is less dense can be more prone to fracture.
- Detectors measure the energy of the X-Rays that have passed through the body and send this information to a computer which then produces an image of the area scanned and calculates the density of the bone.

Why do I need to undergo a DEXA scan?

To undergo a DEXA scan, you must have a referral letter from a clinician (such as a Consultant, GP, Physiotherapist or other registered healthcare professional).

This Clinician will have an understanding of your symptoms or condition and has decided a DEXA scan is the best option for you in order to diagnose or assess your condition.

Bone density is known to reduce as we age, but there are also certain medications and a number of medical conditions which are known to reduce bone density regardless of age. Some lifestyle choices also influence bone density.

What are the benefits of a DEXA scan?

DEXA is an effective and accurate test that is designed to measure normal bone and produces numbers as a measure of density of bones. DEXA scans can measure the mineral content in your bones, which can't be measured as accurately in an ordinary X-Ray.

It is advantageous for clinicians to monitor your bone density if necessary and assess the effectiveness of treatment for low bone mineral density. Unlike ordinary X-Rays, DEXA scans can measure reduction in bone density which makes it possible to diagnose low bone mass/osteoporosis before you break a bone.

Is a DEXA scan safe and are there any risks involved?

- As a small amount of radiation is used during a DEXA scan, Heath Lodge Clinic adheres to the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations (IR(ME)R) for England. Under these regulations, scans are carried out appropriately and radiation is used safely to protect patients from the risk of harm when being exposed to ionising radiation.



- Heath Lodge Clinic's responsibilities include ensuring unintended, excessive or incorrect medical exposures do not happen. Heath Lodge also has to justify each exposure to ensure the benefits outweigh the risk, and optimising diagnostic doses of radiation to keep them as low as possible during the DEXA scan.
- DEXA scans are safe, they use a low dose of radiation, and the clinician who is conducting the scan can remain in the scanning room with you for the duration of your scan.
- The amount of radiation used during a bone density scan is less than 2 days exposure to natural background radiation.
- However, it's extremely important that we are informed if there is a possibility that you might be pregnant, or are pregnant.
- Despite being very safe, DEXA scans are not recommended for pregnant women.

Is a DEXA scan painful?

We will do our best to ensure your comfort during the scan, however as you will be lying flat, some people may experience discomfort due to this position. You will feel no pain as a direct result of the scan.

On the day

- **Before the scan: How do I prepare for a DEXA scan?**

Please inform a member of the team if you have any special requirements- for example, if you have difficulty with hearing or poor eyesight, or if you are nervous about undergoing your DEXA scan for any reason. The DEXA scanner is open, and not like an MRI scanner, so please be reassured you will not feel claustrophobic.

No special preparations are needed before having a DEXA scan, except to stop taking any calcium supplements for 24 hours before the test.

- **What should I wear?**

You may be asked to change into a gown. Please try to avoid wearing clothing containing any metal zips or fasteners, or metal threads/ fibres.

If you wear loose-fitting clothing with no fasteners you may be able to remain fully clothed, depending on the area of your body being scanned.

Please note that we do provide lockable areas for small personal items such as mobile phones, car keys and credit or debit cards, and your clothes should you be required to get changed into a gown.

- **Can I eat and drink?**

Do NOT take calcium supplements or vitamins on the day of your scan.

- **What happens when I arrive and who will I see?**

A member of our team will meet you at Reception and help you to prepare for your DEXA scan. If you have not already done so we will complete a thorough questionnaire with you and will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

You will be asked to sign a consent form before your scan.

Our friendly Radiography team will look after you for the duration of your DEXA scan.

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- Where is the DEXA scan performed?
All DEXA scans are performed within the Imaging department of Heath Lodge Clinic. This is a controlled environment, and there are toilet facilities, as well as private changing rooms and lockers.
- What happens during the DEXA scan and how is it performed?
You will lie on the couch on your back while the DEXA scan is being performed. The scanner arm moves up your body while scanning but does not touch you.
- How long will it take?
The scan will usually take between 10- 20 minutes.
- Will I need an injection?
No, you will not need an injection.

Can I bring a friend or relative with me?

Yes, you can bring a friend or relative with you.

Due to limited spaces in our waiting area we politely ask that **you bring one person and only if needed.**

They will not be able to accompany you into the DEXA scanning Department.

Children should not be unaccompanied on site and children will not be allowed into the DEXA scanning Department with you, so you will need to make arrangements for them before you arrive for your scan.

It is worth noting we have no facilities for unaccompanied children on site.

I am claustrophobic and not sure if I will be able to have a DEXA scan?

Patients do not experience claustrophobia whilst having a DEXA scan but if you have any concerns, we can arrange for you to speak with a member of our team who will explain the procedure and make some suggestions to make your visit more comfortable.

Are there any side effects after the scan?

There are no known side effects from undergoing a DEXA scan.

After the DEXA scan

As there are no side effects after undergoing a DEXA scan, you will be able to leave the clinic when the scan has been completed and resume your normal daily activities- including driving.

How do I obtain my results?

To discuss the findings from your DEXA scan, and to find out what your next steps may be, you should make an appointment with the clinician who referred you for your DEXA scan.

Results take approximately 10 days to reach your clinician.

Please note that there is free accessibility car parking available for our patients.

Should you have any questions please email contact@heathlodgeclinic.co.uk or call 01564 732150.