



What is a DEXA Scan?

DEXA (Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry), also called Bone Mineral Densitometry, uses two energy levels of low dose x-ray, equalling the amount of radiation received from spending half a day on the beach in the sun, to quickly measure the bone density of several skeletal sites including hips and spine. DEXA scans are completely non-invasive.

The DEXA scanner sends a thin, invisible beam of low-dose x-rays with two distinct energy peaks through the bones being examined. One peak is absorbed mainly by soft tissue and the other by bone. The soft tissue amount can be subtracted from the total and what remains is your bone mineral density.

DEXA is considered the gold standard in diagnosing osteoporosis, assessing risk of fracture, and monitoring response to therapy for osteoporosis. Bone densitometry has become widely used because measuring BMD is the only method available for diagnosing osteoporosis in asymptomatic individuals, and it is the best predictor of future risk of fractures. When only routine x-rays are used to assess bone density, bone loss of 30% to 40% must occur before demineralisation can be detected.

What does a DEXA scanner look like?

A DEXA scanner has a large, flat table and an "arm" suspended overhead.

At Allied Medical Center, the table weight limitation is 150kg.



How do I prepare for my scan?

No preparation is required for a DEXA scan.

It is very important to bring the request form from your Clinician as well as all previous related imaging reports and images on CD or film with you on the day of your DEXA study for the Radiologist to review and compare for a comprehensive impression of your health.

Please inform your Clinician and our Technologist if there is a possibility that you may be pregnant or if you are breast feeding as radiation is involved.

How long will the scan take?

A DEXA scan takes around 15 minutes.

What can I expect during my scan?

Prior to the DEXA scan, you will be asked to complete a DEXA safety questionnaire of your general health and medical history. This will be archived as part of your medical records.

You will be collected by a specially qualified Technologist and will be asked to change into a comfortable gown. You will be asked to remove any metal around the lower back and hip area.

The attending Technologist will take your weight and height measurements and will enter this information together with your name, date of birth and ethnic classification into the system.

You will be positioned on the examination table in a comfortable position and the Technologist will explain the procedure to you. You can breathe normally, but you will be requested by the Technologist not to move during the scan. Any movement can result in inaccurate measurements.

The overhead arm of the scanner will move slowly above your body to take the BMD measurements required.

What happens after my scan?

You may eat and drink as usual and return to your normal daily routine straightaway.

When will I get my results?

Your study will be reported within 24 hours and a written report will be sent to your referring Clinician upon completion. You will be asked to wait a few minutes while we burn your images on a CD which will be given to you to take back to your Clinician at your follow-up appointment. Your Clinician will discuss the findings with you.

Any other questions?

If you have any other questions, worries or doubts do not hesitate to ask one of our staff.

We want you to feel as comfortable as possible.