

What is a Bone Density Scan (DEXA Scan)?

A bone density scan measures the amount of minerals in your bones to see if you have any bone loss. It is also called a DEXA scan (Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry). A DEXA scan uses a small amount of x-rays to measure the bone density of your lower back, hip, and sometimes forearm.

Why is it done?

Bone density scans are most commonly used to diagnose osteoporosis. This condition causes a gradual loss of calcium to the bones. Calcium loss makes bones thin, fragile, and more prone to break. Your doctor may also send you for a DEXA if they are concerned about your overall bone health, which can be effected by many factors, such as prolonged steroid use.

How is it done?

A bone density scan is a quick and simple test. When you arrive, you will be asked a brief list of questions, and your height and weight will be measured. You will then be asked to lie on a padded table for about 5-10 minutes while a mechanical arm passes over your body. The machine uses a very low amount of radiation (lower than a chest x-ray) to measure your bone density.

How do I prepare for the test?

- **Do not** take calcium pills (including TUMS and multivitamins) for 24 hours before your test.
- No barium or nuclear medicine studies **at least 1 week** prior to your test.
- Do not have this test if you are pregnant.

How long will it take to get my results?

The results will be available for your doctor on the same day that the procedure is completed.