What is a DXA scan?
DXA scans use low energy x-ray to measure bone density. Two different energies are used to distinguish between bone and soft tissue. Bone density can be measured in the lower spine, femur and the forearm. DXA scans of the spine and hip are routinely used to diagnose osteoporosis and monitor the effects of osteoporosis treatment or other conditions that cause bone loss.

Is there a cost?
There may be an out-of-pocket expense for your DXA examination as not all requests can be charged to Medicare. The current DXA fee is approximately $100. If your scan does not qualify for a Medicare rebate, you will be out of pocket for the full amount and are required to pay on the day of your scan. Your referring doctor will also be able to provide further information.

What preparation is required for a DXA scan?
- Please do not bring young children to your appointment. There is no facility to mind your children while you are having your scan and they are unable to accompany you into the scan room.
- Please inform the booking clerk if you have had a barium study, CT scan, MRI, angiogram or nuclear medicine examination recently. This may affect when we schedule your booking.
- Please inform the booking clerk if your weight is 130kg or more.
- Please inform the booking clerk if you cannot stand or require a wheelchair and cannot transfer independently.
- Please inform the booking clerk if there is any chance you may be pregnant.
- You can eat and drink normally before your scan, but please do not take any calcium supplements on the day of your DXA exam as this can interfere with the scan results.
- If you have received an appointment letter in the mail please complete the enclosed questionnaire and bring it with you to your appointment. This gives us information to help us correctly analyse and interpret your results. You will need to wear light comfortable clothing without buttons, metal zips, buckles or hooks around the waist and hip area. No under wire bras.
What happens during a DXA scan?
- During the scan you will need to lie flat on the padded table.
- The machine will pass slowly over the area to be scanned. Each scan takes several minutes to complete.
- The radiographer stays in the room with you during the scan.

Your examination should take about 15-30 minutes, but this may vary.

What happens after a DXA scan?
- The Radiologist’s report is automatically forwarded to your doctor.
- Please return to your doctor to discuss examination results

Radiation Risk
Most medical imaging tests, except MRI and ultrasound, involve exposure to radiation from X-rays. Your doctor considers that the benefits of the examination you require to be greater than the small risk posed by the radiation exposure.

Contact information
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References
Inside Radiology:
The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists®

Search Bone Mineral Density Scan (Bone Densitometry or DXA Scan) for more information

If you would like to provide feedback or request this information in a different format, contact us at patient.information@alfred.org.au