

Bone Densitometry (DEXA)

Patient Information

Overview

A bone densitometry or DEXA , scan is a x-ray scan of your lower spine and non-dominant hip to determine risk for osteopenia and osteoporosis.

Preparation for the exam:

There is no prep for a DEXA scan, but if a patient has had back, hip, or wrist surgery or has broken any of those areas, the results can be skewed. If there is any hardware in any of those areas, they cannot be scanned. If those areas have been fractured, they cannot be scanned due to the calcification of the fracture site.

Appointment time:

Please note that Bone Densitometry scans are only done at The Imaging Center. Your appointment will be scheduled ahead of time by your doctors' office through the hospital scheduling service. Please arrive 15 minutes prior to your exam, as you will be required to register, visit our billing office and fill out other necessary forms. If you are unsure of your appoint time, need to reschedule, or cancel your appointment, please contact your doctors' office or the hospital scheduling service at 770-538-7666 Menu Option 1. Since Northeast Georgia is a major medical center there are emergencies that could arise that might extend your wait time. Please try to be patient and be assured that we will get to your study as quickly as possible.

Your Bone Densitometry (DEXA) Scan:

You will be escorted into one of our exam rooms by a radiologic technologist and asked to change into a hospital gown. As an alternative, you may arrive wearing sweatpants and a sweatshirt/tee-shirt that does not have buttons, zippers, snaps, or rivets on them. You will be asked to remove any necklaces, earrings, removable dental work, body piercings/jewelry, and brassiere, as metal and hard plastic interferes with the x-ray image. Bone densitometry is used to determine a patients BMD (Bone Mineral Density). Or in laymen's terms, a bone densitometry test (DEXA scan) is used to determine osteoporosis. This is accomplished by scanning L1-L5, the "less dominate hip" (the opposite hip of the patient's dominate hand) and/or the patient's wrist. The results are listed as "T" score, and "Z" score. The "T" score shows the amount of bone you have compared with a young adult of the same gender with peak bone mass. A score above 1 is considered normal. A score between -1 and -2.5 is considered osteopenia, which is the first stage of bone loss before osteoporosis. A score below -2.5 is osteoporosis. The "Z" score compares your bone mass to a person your age, size, and gender. A score either too high or too low would indicate further medical tests.

The conclusion of your exam:

You will be given written, take-home instructions at the conclusion of your exam.

Results:

The radiologist will interpret your exam and the results of your exam will be sent to your doctor.

