

Patient information factsheet

Nuclear medicine – bone scan

We have given you this factsheet because you have an appointment for a nuclear medicine scan. Your appointment letter will give you details of your appointment date and other useful information. Please check the date and let us know if you will not be able to attend, so that another appointment can be arranged for you. We hope this factsheet will help to answer your questions about the scan and prepare you for your appointment.

What is a nuclear medicine scan?

A nuclear medicine scan uses radioactive materials to look at how some areas of the body function.

A bone scan is a test to look at your bones.

Preparing for your bone scan

You need to allow four hours for the scan.

There is no preparation required for this scan and you can eat and drink as normal before your appointment. You will not be asked to undress for this scan, so please wear comfortable clothing.

At the appointment

To allow us to see areas within your body, we will need to give you an injection containing a radioactive tracer (a small amount of radioactive liquid). The radioactive tracer will show up when images are taken with our imaging systems. The injection will feel very similar to having a blood test and has no side effects.

The scan will take place three hours later. During the three hour wait, it is important that you drink plenty. You are free to wait in our waiting room or you can go away and come back later if you prefer.

For the scan we will ask you to lie on a couch and we will take images of your body with a gamma camera. The couch will not go through a tunnel and the camera will not touch you. The images taken will show how well parts of your body are working, but sometimes we will need to finish the test with a short CT scan to show the area in more detail. A CT scan uses x-rays. Combining both sets of images will allow us to accurately see where the radioactivity has been taken up.

In some cases, we may need to provide some support to help you maintain the best position during imaging. This may include the use of wraps, light bandaging or foam pads. We will ask your permission before we use any of these positional support aids.

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Your results

Your images will be reviewed in the department to ensure we have enough information. Once the images have been checked you will be free to go home.

A report will also be sent back to the consultant who requested that you have a scan.

Radiation protection information

Please read the information below carefully

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

Some procedures could be harmful to an unborn baby, so if you are a female of child-bearing age, you may be asked to confirm whether you are or could be pregnant before we can proceed with the scan.

If you know or think you might be pregnant, or are currently breastfeeding, you should telephone us for advice as soon as you receive your appointment letter.

Urinary incontinence (loss of bladder control)

Before your appointment, it is important that you let us know if you suffer from incontinence. This is so we can advise you, as some radiation passes out in the urine. If you wear pads, please bring a spare one with you. If you have a catheter, the bag will need emptying before your scan.

Is the scan safe?

The amount of radiation you will receive during your scan is small (similar to a CT scan). The benefits of having the scan far outweigh any potential risk from the radiation. A doctor has checked the request to make sure this is the correct test for you.

Where possible, keep your distance from children under the age of five and anyone who may be pregnant for the rest of the day. If your job involves using radioactive substances, you may not be able to return to work immediately. For more advice, please telephone **023 8120 6627**.

Travel

Many airports and seaports have security radiation detectors installed. These are very sensitive and may respond even though the levels of radiation you have been exposed to are very low. If you intend to travel by aeroplane or ferry in the five days following the scan, we would suggest you take your appointment letter with you.

Bringing someone with you for support

If a relative or friend comes with you for your scan, it is important that they are not pregnant. Your relative or friend may not be able to go with you into the imaging room.

Please do not bring children with you. We do not have crèche facilities, so if you are attending with young children, you will need to make arrangements for their supervision during your examination.

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Further information

We have enclosed a map and information on how to get to us. If you are arriving by car, please remember our car parks can get very busy, so it's a good idea to allow plenty of time to find a space. You may wish to consider getting a lift or coming by public transport.

If you have a medical condition that means you need help getting to hospital, please contact your GP surgery so they can arrange transportation for you.

We aim to respect your dignity and privacy at all times. If you need a sensitive or intimate examination, you may wish a chaperone to be present during the test. Please ask and we will provide one for you.

Contact us

If you have any concerns or would like further information, you can contact the department on **023 8120 6627** from 8am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. If you are unsure why you need to have this scan, please speak to the doctor who referred you.

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.