OSTEOPOROSIS NEW ZEALAND
Better bones, fewer fractures

Understanding your Bone Density (DXA) Scan

What is a DXA scan?

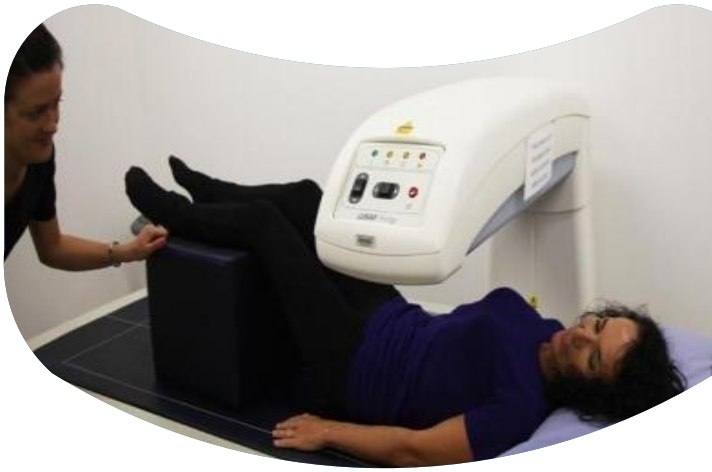
A DXA (Dual-Energy X-ray Absorptiometry) scan is a simple, safe and painless test that measures bone mineral density — the amount of calcium and minerals in your bones. It is the gold standard test for diagnosing osteoporosis.

Why might I need a DXA scan?

- Have had a fracture from a minor bump or fall
- Are postmenopausal or aged 65 years and over
- Take long-term steroid medication
- Have a family history of osteoporosis or hip fracture
- Have medical conditions affecting bone health

What happens during the DXA scan?

- You lie comfortably on a padded table
- A scanning arm moves slowly over your lower spine and hip
- The test usually takes 10–20 minutes
- The scan is painless and the table is not enclosed
- Radiation exposure is extremely low



How do I prepare?

- Wear loose, comfortable clothing
- Avoid clothing with metal (zips, belts or buttons)
- Remove jewellery
- Bring a list of your medications
- Tell staff if you have metal implants or may be pregnant
- Have a family history of osteoporosis or hip fracture
- Have medical conditions affecting bone health

Please note that certain procedures can affect DXA results. If you have had one of these (table below) - please ring and inform your Fracture Liaison Service (FLS) team and radiology provider to reschedule your appointment.

The following agents do affect DXA results. Recommended delay times as follows			
	Procedure	**Agents**	**Delay times**
	IV Contrast – e.g. Angiogram, CT, MRI	Iodine (xray or CT) Gadolium (MRI)	1 day 1 day
	Barium mean – e.g. Barium Enema	Barium	7 days
	Nuclear Medicine Scans – e.g. Bones, Kidneys,Cardiac	Technetium Thallium Galliumn	2 days 7 days 14 days
	Nuclear Medicine Treatments	Radio-iodine	7 days

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Understanding your results

T-score: Compares your bone density to a healthy young adult at peak bone strength.

Z-score: Compares your bone density to someone your age and body size.

Your healthcare provider will explain what your results mean and discuss monitoring, lifestyle changes or treatment if needed.

After your scan

You can return to normal activities straight away. Your results will be sent to your healthcare provider, who will discuss them with you.

Follow-up bone density test

A follow-up bone density test may be required in 3–5 years to monitor your bone health, review the effectiveness of treatment, or if there has been a significant change in health status. It is recommended to have the follow-up test done at the same clinic on the same machine, as measurements from different machines often cannot be directly compared.

Heel ultrasound available in pharmacies is a quick check for bone health only. It is not suitable to diagnose or guide treatment for osteoporosis.

Looking after your bones

- Adequate calcium intake
- Safe vitamin D levels
- Falls prevention strategies
- Avoiding smoking and limiting alcohol
- Regular weight-bearing and strength exercise

This fact sheet has been developed by Osteoporosis New Zealand & Fracture Liaison Network New Zealand *to support patients attending Fracture Liaison Services.*

Know Your Bones.™ Visit osteoporosis.org.nz/take-the-test

Complete the online bone health assessment and you'll receive a personalised report explaining your risk of fracture and recommendations for better bone health.

If you would like to assist us in helping others like yourself, please consider donating to Osteoporosis NZ.
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