

Patient information leaflet

Bone scan

Radiology department

Introduction

We hope this guide will answer your questions about your bone scan examination. Please contact the team if you require further information via the details at the end of this leaflet.

What is a bone scan?

A bone scan is a way of looking at the function of the bone cells and helps to diagnose and evaluate a variety of bone diseases and conditions using a small amount of radioactive tracer (a radioactive solution also called radiotracer or radioactive isotope) that is injected into the bloodstream.

The radiotracer travels through the area being examined and gives off radiation in the form of gamma rays, which are detected by a special gamma camera and a computer to create images of your bones.

Why do I need a bone scan?

You are having this examination as it will help your doctor to decide on the cause of your symptoms. This procedure will give clearer information to the clinicians treating you.

What are the associated risks?

The amount of radioactive tracer used to take the pictures is very small and the radioactivity is short-lived. The risk is outweighed by the benefit from the information that is gained by having the scan. A doctor will have checked the request to make sure this is the optimal test before we contact you.

Preparing for your procedure

There are no special preparations before your bone scan. You can eat and drink as you normally would.

Pregnancy

If you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant, or are breastfeeding, please tell the radiographer **before** your appointment date, as we may need to postpone the scan or give special instructions with regard to breastfeeding.

Medication

Please continue to take all medications as usual prior to your bone scan.

Getting to us

The Princess Alexandra Hospital (Hamstel Road, Harlow, Essex, CM20 1QX), follow the signage to the radiology reception, which is located on the ground floor, green zone. Please let the receptionists know that you have arrived for your appointment.

When should I arrive?

Please arrive in the radiology department at the time arranged with the nuclear medicine department when booking your appointment.

You may receive an appointment letter in the post and this may be followed up with a text confirmation.

Can someone stay with me in the hospital?

You are able to have a friend or relative attend with you, as long as they are not young children or pregnant; however, due to ionising radiation regulations, only patients are allowed in the scanning room.

(If the child is the patient then obviously parents may accompany them into the scanning room).

Children are not allowed in the waiting area unattended. Our staff are not permitted to supervise children, so please ensure child care arrangements are in place to avoid your tests being rescheduled.

The day of the procedure

A member of the nuclear medicine team will collect you from the waiting area and bring you into our preparation room, where they will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you may have.

You will then be given an injection, where a small amount of radioactivity will be injected into a vein in your arm or hand. This is similar to having a blood test. The injection does not have any known side effects and does not make you feel drowsy.

After the injection, you have to wait for the radioactivity to be absorbed into your bones; this process takes between 2 to 3 hours.

During this time, you can leave the department but **must** return at the requested time for your scan (you will be informed of this time after your injection is complete).

Please drink plenty of fluids, eat normally, and go to the toilet as often as you need. This will help us get good pictures of your bones when you return for your scan.

To avoid giving an unnecessary radiation dose, do not cuddle or hold closely a baby or small child for prolonged periods of time after the injection and for the rest of the day.

The procedure

When you return to the department, you will be asked to go to the toilet to empty your bladder. You do not usually have to get changed/undressed, but you will be asked to empty your pockets and remove any metal objects like mobile phones, jewellery, keys, coins, belts, and braces before your scan. On some occasions you may be asked to change into a hospital gown.

These items can then be kept in the scanning room with you.

You will then be asked to lie on our scanning table. The scans are taken by a special machine called a gamma camera. The scans usually take 30-45 minutes and it is very important that you keep still.

The camera is not a tunnel, but it will be positioned close to you; however, there are sensors to prevent it from touching you.

Please tell the radiographer if you think you will find this difficult for any reason. Staff will be at a short distance where they can see and hear you at all times.

After the procedure

You can eat, drink as normal and go where you wish. Please avoid close contact with children and pregnant women for the rest of the day. Close contact means having a child sit next to you for more than half an hour. This is to avoid exposing children to unnecessary radiation.

Please continue drinking more than usual to help clear the radioactivity from your body.

Can I drive after my procedure?

You are able to drive as soon as you are discharged from the department.

How soon can I return to work?

It is advisable to return to work the following day after your scan. However, if you wish to discuss this further, please contact the department using the telephone number at the end of this leaflet.

When will I get my results?

You will not know the results of your examination immediately. The radiologist will report their findings to the clinician who arranged your procedure, who will discuss the results with you. It usually takes a couple of weeks for the results to become available.

Contacting the team

If you have any further questions, please contact the nuclear medicine team on; **01279 827120**, from **Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm**.

There is an answerphone available outside of these hours. Please leave a message and a member of the team will contact you.

Your feedback matters

If you would like to give feedback on your care, please contact our patient experience team at paht.pals@nhs.net or **01279 827211**.

Please contact the communications team at paht.communications@nhs.net if you would like this leaflet in another language or format.