

Nuclear Medicine Department

Information about your bone scan

What is a bone scan?

A nuclear medicine bone scan allows us to take pictures of your bones in a different way to X-rays, which will help your consultant diagnose or manage your condition. In order to perform the scan, you will be given an injection containing a small amount of radioactivity called a radioactive tracer. Over time the radioactive tracer collects in the bones and then we are able to take pictures of them on a scanner called a gamma camera.

Is there any preparation for my bone scan?

- No special preparation is required for this scan. Please continue to eat and drink normally and continue to take your usual medication.
- Please allow plenty of time to get to your appointment, as the radioactive tracer is individually ordered for you and scans cannot normally be delayed.
- **The scan will usually be performed 3 hours after the injection.** You will be given a time to return for your scan after we have given you the injection.
- Please do not bring along anyone who is pregnant or under 18 years of age.
- **You must tell us in advance if you know you are (or think that you may be) pregnant, or are breast feeding.**

What happens during my bone scan?

Our staff will explain the procedure to you fully when you arrive for your appointment.

- Firstly you will be asked to confirm your identity. You may be asked to provide some information about your condition (pain in your bones, past history of broken bones and bone surgeries).
- We will put a small needle into a vein in your arm or hand. You will then be given an injection of a radioactive tracer. If you have a central venous line (either a PICC, Hickman line® or Portacath®) we will be able to give you the injection through it.
- The scan will take place 3 hours later. You will be given a time to return for your scan.



What do I do during the interval between my injection and the scan?

- The delay between the injection and scan is to allow the radioactive tracer to reach your bones.
- During this interval you may leave the hospital. If you have reduced mobility you are welcome to wait in the department and you may bring food.
- We advise you to drink plenty of fluids and empty your bladder regularly. This helps wash out the excess tracer from your body and also makes the images clearer. You may eat as normal during this time.
- **You must attend for the scan at the time given to you by the technologist.**

What happens during my bone scan?

- Just before the scan begins you will be asked to empty your bladder. If you have a urinary catheter bag, you will be asked to empty it.
- We will then ask you to lie on the scan bed with your arms by the sides. We will make sure you are as comfortable as possible for the scan, as it is extremely important that you remain as still as you can.
- The scan bed will not go through a tunnel and the machine will never touch you. The scanner is not noisy. You will be able to listen to background music if you wish to.
- You will not be asked to undress, but you will need to remove all metal objects.
- Most scans last between 30 to 45 minutes and whilst the pictures are taken a member of staff will be observing you at all times.

Will I feel anything during my scan?

The injection feels similar to having blood taken. There are no side effects from this injection, it will not make you feel sleepy or affect your ability to drive.

Having the pictures taken will not hurt, but if you are in a lot of pain or find it difficult to keep still, please tell us.

What happens after my bone scan?

When we have checked the technical quality of your scan and are happy we have all the information we need, you will be able to leave the department.

Continue to drink plenty of fluid for the rest of the day and empty your bladder regularly. This helps wash out the tracer from your body more quickly. You may eat as normal.

A radiologist will provide a report on the scan, usually within a few days, then the results will be sent to the consultant who referred you. We will not be able to give you any results on the day.

How safe is the examination?

There are small risks associated with the radiation that you will be exposed to for this test. However, the images give the doctors important information about your condition that helps in your treatment. The benefits of the information from the scan outweigh the small risks of exposure to radiation.

Following your injection, and for the rest of the day following your scan, you should try to avoid long periods of close contact with other people.

What are the benefits of my bone scan?

A bone scan is very sensitive and allows us to see the changes in the bone, often before they can be seen on a plain X-ray. It also allows us to look at all your bones during one examination.

What happens if I decide not to have the bone scan?

If you decide not to have the bone scan, then please discuss this with the doctor looking after you.

What happens if I cannot keep my appointment?

If you cannot keep your appointment contact the nuclear medicine department as soon as possible so that we can offer the appointment to someone else and make you a new appointment.

Please attend promptly at the time shown on the attached appointment letter.

If you have any questions about this appointment, or any queries about the examination, please telephone the number below:

Tel: 0161 446 3942/6

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



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urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
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