



Further investigations following your recent fracture

The Bone Health / Fracture Liaison Service would like to refer you for further investigations following your recent fracture. The information below explains why we wish to do this and what this entails.

What is the reason for my referral for further assessment?

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommends that patients sustaining a lower impact or fragility* fracture over the age of 50 should be referred for further investigations to screen for a condition called osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is a condition in which bones become less dense inside, making a person more likely to break a bone. Osteoporosis is almost always symptomless and breaking a bone is often the first sign of this condition, so as a precaution we would like to carry out some tests.

There are many conditions and lifestyle choices that can increase our risk of osteoporosis but family history or genetic factors can also play a big part. Unfortunately, some patients can have osteoporosis without having any known risk factors or a family history.

Osteoporosis is a common cause of hip and spinal fractures later in life, and by identifying the condition earlier, we can help to prevent these fractures in the long term. Although osteoporosis is often thought of as an 'older person's disease', it can affect patients much earlier. Early diagnosis can significantly improve patient outcomes and is a highly treatable condition. By identifying patients with osteoporosis in its early stages, we can reduce the risk of fractures (particularly hip and spine) as we mature.

*Lower impact or fragility is what we call fractures caused by falling from the height of 3 standard stairs and below.

Which investigations will I need and why?

In most people aged 50–74, we recommend a bone density (DEXA) scan to assess bone strength and identify any signs of bone loss. Depending on the results, further assessment, such as blood tests, or treatment may be recommended to help reduce the risk of future fractures and support your bone health.

- **A bone density or DEXA scan:** A bone density scan (DEXA) is a simple painless low-dose X-ray test that checks the density of the inside of your bones to calculate their strength and longer-term fracture risk.
DEXA machines usually scan bones in the lower spine and hip. These are the most reliable sites to check, even if they are not the location of your recent fracture. A DEXA scan will take between 10 and 20 minutes and **does not involve being enclosed in a mechanical tunnel**. Generally you do not have to remove clothing but clothes with metal should be avoided (metal belts are not advised but underwired bras are okay). You have to be able to get onto the table but no other physical activity is required for the scan.

The scan compares your bones to a reference range of young healthy adults with average bone density, and to other people your own age. The difference between this average and your bone density is calculated and you are given a score. This score will tell us if your bone density falls into 1 of 3 categories: normal bone, osteopenia (reduced density but not osteoporosis), or osteoporosis.

- **If your DEXA results show osteopenia or osteoporosis, you will need an additional blood test:**

This looks for conditions that could be affecting the way your body makes new bone (including your kidneys, liver and thyroid). The blood test also checks the levels of some of the important nutrients your body needs for healthy bone formation such as calcium and Vitamin D.

Sometimes these blood results highlight something you may not already be aware of. If this is the case, please be assured that we will inform you and your GP and help to make a plan going forward.

The Berkshire Independent Hospital will be in touch with a DEXA appointment in due course. Berkshire Independent Hospital (BIH), Swallows Croft, Wensley Road, Coley Park, Reading RG1 6UZ Tel: 0118 902 8000 <https://www.berkshireindependenthospital.co.uk/>

Your results

Once your DEXA scan results are available, we will let you and your GP know the outcome. If further tests or treatment are recommended, we will explain your options and answer any questions you may have. The decision whether to proceed with treatment is always yours.

If you receive the results and still have questions or wish to discuss your options further, you can contact us via telephone or email. Our contact details will be at the top of the page in all of our correspondence. We may contact you with your results by telephone call or letter. If you have a preference as to how we get in touch, please let us know when getting in touch to provide consent for the scan and every attempt will be made to accommodate your request.

Who should not have a DEXA scan?

To have a DEXA scan, you need to be able to get onto the scanning table independently or with minimal assistance, as patients cannot be hoisted onto the scanner. The table is relatively low, but you must be able to transfer onto it safely.

The scanner can accommodate patients weighing up to 200 kg. If you think you may weigh more than this, please let us know before your appointment. In some cases, it may still be possible to perform the scan, although we may need to scan different areas of the body.

You can still attend your appointment if you have a cast, brace, splint, or external metalwork in place, provided you feel physically able to attend and transfer onto the scanner table.

To avoid unnecessary exposure to X-ray, DEXA scans should only be performed when clinically indicated. If you have had a DEXA scan within the last two years, please inform us, as repeat scanning is not usually recommended within this timeframe.

Further information

The Royal Osteoporosis Society website has lots of useful information and advice, visit <https://theros.org.uk/information-and-support/fact-sheets-and-leaflets/>

Contacting us

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To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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Next review due: July 2028.