



**Royal Berkshire**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Having a DEXA scan

## Information for patients

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Your doctor has recommended that you have a bone density (DEXA) scan. This leaflet will help you to understand this procedure and how it can help your health.

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### Why do I need a DEXA scan?

The scan is used to diagnose or assess a person's risk of osteoporosis. You may need to have a DEXA scan if you are over 50 years of age with a risk of developing osteoporosis or if you are under 50 with other risk factors, such as smoking or previous fractures.

### What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis causes you to break bones more easily. Osteoporosis can be treated to reduce your risk of having a further fracture. One in two women and one in five men over the age of 50 will have a fragility fracture. There are over half a million fractures every year.

### What is a DEXA scan?

A DEXA (Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry) scan is an accurate test to measure the density of your bones. It is endorsed by the National Osteoporosis Society as the 'gold standard' for diagnosing osteoporosis.



### About the scan

- The DEXA scan is performed for Reading NHS patients at the Berkshire Independent Hospital.
- The scan takes 15-20 minutes, is completely painless and you'll be able to go home immediately after you've had it done.  
Before the scan starts, your height and weight will be measured in

order for the computer to more accurately calculate your expected bone density.

- After this, you will be asked to lie on your back on a flat, open X-ray table. You'll need to keep very still during the scan itself, so the images aren't blurred.

### Are there any risks of having a DEXA scan?

DEXA is considered to be safe and the dose of radiation is considerably smaller than a standard chest X-ray (a DEXA is equivalent to one-tenth of a standard chest X-ray).

### Who should **not** have a DEXA scan?

- Those who are or may be pregnant.
- If you have had an X-ray, CT or MRI examination using contrast/dye, or a nuclear medicine scan, eg of bone or thyroid, in the past few weeks please let us know before the scan.
- Those whose weight is above 145kg (22 stone 11lbs).
- Those who need a hoist to transfer. Unfortunately the DEXA machine cannot accommodate a hoist.

### Do I need to fast or stop any medication beforehand?

You do not need to stop food or fluid and can continue to take all your tablets or medication as normal.

### Can I bring someone with me?

A relative, partner or close friend is welcome to accompany you to your DEXA scan, but will be asked to wait outside the scan room while you have your scan.

## How do I get the results of the scan?

The results of your scan will be reviewed by a rheumatologist, and the report along with further advice will be sent to your GP, as well as the hospital consultant.

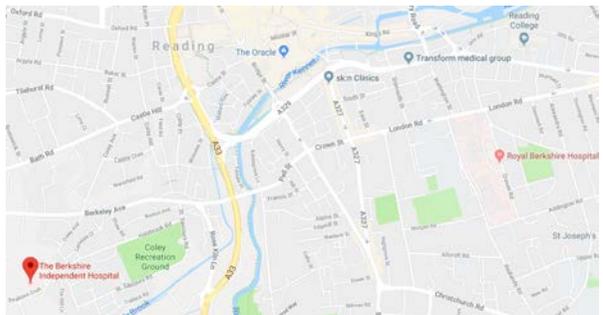
We look forward to seeing you at your scheduled time for your NHS DEXA scan; if you need to reschedule it, please contact the Rheumatology CAT Team at the Royal Berkshire Hospital on the number below.

## Contact us

Rheumatology Clinical Admin Team (CAT 9): 0118 322 7969

Email: [rbb-tr.cat9@nhs.net](mailto:rbb-tr.cat9@nhs.net)

The DEXA scan will be performed at:  
Berkshire Independent Hospital  
Swallows Croft, Wensley Road  
Reading RG1 6UZ  
Tel: 0118 902 8000



## More information

Visit the Trust website at [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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