

DEXA Scan



Education

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

What is a DEXA Scan?

A DEXA Scan uses a special camera to measure the strength of your child's bones. The test is also known as a Bone (mineral) Density Study.

How are the pictures taken?

The DEXA Technologist (a person trained in taking these special pictures) will bring you and your child into the exam room.

- When it is time for the test, your child will lie down on a special table with a safety belt over him. The camera is over the table and comes close to, but does not touch your child.
- Your child needs to lie very still for the test. Sometimes a special sponge is used to help hold your child's body in the correct position for the pictures.
- The test may take about 20 minutes to complete, but may take longer based on your child's needs.

NOTE: You may stay with your child during the test. Pregnant mothers, brothers or sisters are not allowed in the exam room.

Who performs the test?

The Technologist takes the pictures.

Who looks at the pictures?

A Pediatric Radiologist, a doctor specially trained in children's X-rays, looks at all the pictures and then sends a report to and may talk with your child's doctor.

Are there any risks?

- Radiation in general is a risk, however the amount of radiation used is the smallest amount possible to get the best pictures.

What happens after the test?

- The Technologist will give you any special instructions and let you know when your child can leave.
- After the test, your child may eat as usual, unless your child's doctor tells you not to feed him.

When do I get the results?

- The Radiologist will review the pictures and send a report to your child's doctor.
- Your child's doctor will contact you with the test results in about two to three days.
- Call your child's doctor if you have not heard any test results after 3 days.

continued

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404.250.kids.

How should I prepare my child?

Infants

Although you cannot explain the test to your baby, you can help him feel more secure during the test if you:

- Bring a special blanket, toy or pacifier.
- Comfort him with your presence and voice.
- Bring along a bottle of juice or formula to feed him **after** the test is done.

Toddlers and preschool-age children

Young children can become anxious about having a test done, so the best time to talk with your child is right before the test.

- On the day of the test, tell your child that he will be having some “pictures” taken, so his doctor can help him feel better.
- Use simple words and be honest with him.
- Let your child know that you will stay with him as much as possible during the test.
- When you come to the hospital, bring a favorite book, toy or blanket.
- You may also bring along a snack for **after** the test.

School-age children

School-age children have good imaginations and may frighten themselves by imagining something much worse than the actual test.

- One or two days before the test, tell your child that he is going to the hospital to have some “pictures” taken of his body.
- Use simple words. Be honest with your child and explain exactly what will happen.
- Let your child know that you will stay with him as much as possible during the test.
- When you come to the hospital, bring along a favorite videotape, book, toy or game.
- You may also bring along a snack for **after** the test.

Please note: If there is a chance the patient may be pregnant, tell us before the test, so we can contact her doctor to see if the test still needs to be done.