
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.

What happens during the test?

The DEXA technologist (a person trained in taking these special pictures) will take you and your child into an exam room.

- When it is time for the test, your child will lie down on a special table. The camera is over the table and comes close 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 10 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 and sisters are not allowed in the exam room.

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 them.

When do I get the results?

- A pediatric radiologist, a doctor specially trained in children's X-rays, looks at the pictures and then sends a report to and may talk with your child's doctor.
- Your child's doctor will contact you with the test results in about 2 to 3 days.
- Call your child's doctor if you have not heard any test results after 3 days.

How should I prepare my child?

School-age children

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

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

DEXA scan, continued

- One or 2 days before the test, tell your child they will be going to the hospital to get some pictures taken of their body.
- Use simple words. Be honest with your child. Explain exactly what will happen.
- Let your child know that you will stay with them as much as possible during the test.
- Bring a favorite video, book, toy or game.
- You may also bring a snack to give them **after** the test.

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

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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