**DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING PATHWAYS**
www.imagingpathways.health.wa.gov.au

# Bone Scan

This brochure tells you about a Bone Scan, the benefits and the risks, what happens before, during and after having a Bone Scan.

## What is a Bone Scan?

A bone scan uses a gamma camera and a computer to take pictures of your bones.

Firstly, you will be given an injection of a radioactive liquid into a vein in your arm, which will circulate through your body and help show problem areas in your bones.

A bone scan may be used to show bone tumours, infection and fractures in your bones.

## Benefits of a Bone Scan

- Can show problems in your bones days to months earlier than a normal x-ray.
- Generally painless

## Risks of Bone Scan

Your doctor knows the risks of having a bone scan. Your doctor will consider the risks before recommending you to have a bone scan. Possible risks are:

- Not recommended for pregnant women
- Very small chance you could develop cancer in the long term from the radiation
- If you are breastfeeding, you may be required to stop for a period of time

## Preparation

- Bring your referral letter or request form and all x-rays taken in the last 2 years with you.

- Leave the x-rays with the nuclear medicine staff, as the doctor may need to look at them. These will be returned to you before you leave or you will be told when these are ready to be picked up.
- Leave all jewellery and valuables at home.

Just before the Bone Scan:

- You may be given a gown to wear.
- You may be asked to remove any metal objects.

**Important to tell your doctor before the Bone Scan**

- If you are or may be pregnant.
- If you are breastfeeding.

## What happens during a Bone Scan?

There are two parts to a Bone Scan and a waiting period between:

- First part – 20 to 30 minutes including time taken to get ready. This will include injection of the radioactive liquid and may include having some pictures taken straight after the injection.
- 3 – 6 hours waiting time between
- Second part – 30 to 60 minutes including time taken to get ready.

(Total 4 – 7 hours altogether)

### Injection of radioactive liquid

Nuclear medicine staff will inject a small amount of radioactive liquid into a vein in your arm.

### Bone Scan (s)

You will be asked to lie on a bed or sit underneath the gamma camera. The staff will set up the camera and leave the room while the pictures are taken. They can see, hear and speak to you at all times. You will be able to speak to them at all times. They will tell you what is happening and when to hold still.

The gamma camera may pass over your body while it is taking the pictures.

During the waiting time you will need to drink lots of fluid and may go to the toilet as many times as you like. You may eat anything you like and take medications as required.

### Consent

You have the right to refuse an examination and may do so if you wish. You may be asked to fill in a consent form.

## When will I get the results?

The amount of time it takes for you to get your results will differ depending on where you get your scans done. The nuclear medicine doctor will look at the pictures and write a report. The pictures may be on films or on a CD.

Ask whether you should wait to take the pictures and report with you, or whether they will be sent to your doctor.

Your doctor will need to discuss the report with you. You will need to make an appointment to do this.

## After the Bone Scan

You will be able to go soon after the bone scan has finished and can continue with normal activities.

- Staff will need to take out the needle if it is still in your arm.
- Staff will give you any special instructions
- The radioactive liquid will pass out of your body in your urine within 2 days. You will not notice it as it is colourless.
- Drink plenty of fluid to help get rid of the radioactive liquid.

## Costs

The cost of a bone scan will depend on exactly what is needed and where the scan is performed. When you ring to book your scan, you may wish to ask if it will cost you anything. Otherwise, you can ask staff when you go to have your scan.

## Further Information

For more detailed information on a Bone scan, please see the Nuclear Medicine Bone Scan brochure from Inside Radiology, a resource produced especially for consumers by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists.

If you would like to look at other relevant brochures, please see

- Radiation risks of x-rays and scans

Or log into the Diagnostic Imaging Pathways website - www.imagingpathways.health.wa.gov.au/includes/consumer.html

or

If you have questions or require any further information please contact your doctor or speak to the staff where you are going to have your procedure.

## Consumer Participation

This information has been reviewed by representatives from the following groups:

- Aboriginal people
- People with disabilities
- Seniors
- CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)
- The Health Consumers' Council.

## Feedback

The Division of Imaging Services, Royal Perth Hospital is committed to providing a friendly and professional service. If you would like to provide feedback on this information sheet, please send to:

Quality Coordinator
Imaging Services
Royal Perth Hospital
GPO Box X2213
Perth WA 6000

**Website**

For more information go to www.imagingpathways.health.wa.gov.au



Government of Western Australia
Department of Health