



Bone Scan

How to prepare for your scan

A bone scan is a diagnostic nuclear medicine procedure used to evaluate abnormalities involving bones and joints.

This handout explains how to prepare for the scan, how the scan works, how the scan is performed, what you may feel during the scan, and how to get your results.

What is a bone scan?

A bone scan is a nuclear medicine exam that uses an injection of a radioactive compound to diagnose many bone diseases. It is a form of radiology, because radiation is used to capture pictures of the human body.

How does the scan work?

You will be given a small amount of a radioactive material through an intravenous (IV) line. This compound, called a tracer, collects in the bones and joints and gives off gamma rays. The gamma camera detects the rays and then produces pictures and measurements of the bones/joints.

How should I prepare for the scan?

- You are encouraged to drink plenty of fluids.
- A patient who is unable to remain still for an extended period of time may require sedation for a bone scan.
- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not have this test.

How is the scan performed?

1. A radioactive compound will be injected into one of your veins.
2. You will be asked to drink a lot of water after the injection and before the scanning.
3. You will come back to the Nuclear Medicine Department 4 to 6 hours after the injection to undergo imaging of your bones and joints. The imaging involves lying flat while the camera takes pictures.
4. The technologist will help make you comfortable. The imaging may take 30 to 90 minutes. You must not move during the time the camera is taking pictures. If you move, the pictures will be blurry and may have to be repeated.

Questions?

Call 206-598-6200

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

Imaging Services:
206-598-6200

What will I feel during the scan?

- Some minor discomfort during a nuclear medicine procedure may arise from the IV.
- Lying still on the exam table may be hard for some patients.
- Most of the radioactivity passes out of your body in urine. The rest simply goes away over time.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

When the test is over, the nuclear medicine doctor will review your images, prepare a written report, and discuss the results with your doctor. Your doctor will then talk with you about the results and discuss your treatment options. Talk to your doctor to find out whether or not you will need to restart any medications that you stopped for this exam.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
MEDICAL CENTER
UW Medicine

Imaging Services

Box 357115
1959 N.E. Pacific St. Seattle, WA 98195
206-598-6200