

Bone Scan

How to prepare

This handout explains a bone scan, a procedure that is used to diagnose bone diseases. It includes how to prepare, how the scan is done, what you may feel during the scan, and how to get your results.

What is a bone scan?

A bone scan is done to diagnose many kinds of bone disease. It is a nuclear medicine exam that uses a radioactive *tracer* to detect and treat disease. It is a form of radiology because it uses radiation to take pictures of the body.

How does the scan work?

You will be given a small amount of tracer through an *intravenous* (IV) line. The tracer will go into your bones and give off *gamma rays*. A *gamma camera* will detect the rays. It will send data to a computer that will then produce pictures of your bones.



A gamma camera

How do I prepare for the scan?

- Drink plenty of fluids before and after your scan.
- Tell your doctor if it would be hard for you to lie flat on your back for 60 to 90 minutes.
- *Women:* Tell your provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

On Scan Day

Before the Tracer Is Injected

If you are a woman of childbearing age:

- Tell the technologist if there is any chance you may be pregnant.
- We will ask if you are breastfeeding.
- We will again confirm that there is no chance you are pregnant.

What to Expect

- We will inject the tracer into one of your veins.
- After the injection, you may leave for a while. We will ask you to return at a specific time. This will be 3 to 6 hours after the injection.
- We will ask you to drink plenty of fluids after the injection and before the scan starts.
- You will need to lie flat on your back while the gamma camera takes pictures. This may take 1 to 2 hours. The technologist will help make you comfortable.
- **You must not move while the camera is taking pictures.** If you move, the pictures will be blurry and may have to be taken again.

What will I feel during the scan?

- You may feel a little discomfort when the IV line is placed before the scan.
- Lying still on the exam table may be hard for some people.

What happens to the radioactive tracer?

Drink plenty of water for 24 hours after your scan to help your body get rid of the tracer. Most of it will leave your body in your urine or stool. The rest will go 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, write up a report, and talk with your provider about the results. Your provider will then share your scan results with you.

You may also read your results on your MyChart page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

You and your provider will then decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- UWMC – Montlake Nuclear Medicine: 206.598.4240
- UWMC - Northwest Imaging Services: 206.598.4240