

Bone Scan

What is a Bone Scan?

Your doctor has suggested you/your child have a bone scan as part of the evaluation at National Jewish. A bone scan is a test that can identify bone that is diseased or injured. Normally, bone absorbs nutrients that are the building blocks of bone formation. If bone is diseased or injured nutrients are absorbed differently. The bone scan takes pictures of this process. A bone scan can pick up on bone disease or injury that may not be seen with a traditional x-ray.

How do you get ready for the test?

- Wear loose fitting clothing. Avoid clothing that has metal or other clothing fasteners like buttons or zippers. You can be given a gown to wear if this is not possible.

What is done during the test?

The nuclear medicine technologist will explain the bone scan to you before you start. Ask questions if you don't understand. The technologist will inject a liquid radiopharmaceutical into a vein. This is a liquid with a low level of radioactivity. Once this is done, you can leave the radiology department and will be asked to return in 3 hours for the bone scan. The technologist will give you a specific time to return. During the 3 hours you will be encouraged to drink a few glasses of water.

When you return the technologist will have you/your child remove clothing that has metal or other clothing fasteners like buttons or zippers. You will be given a hospital gown and/or pajama bottoms to wear if this is not possible.

You will lie on an imaging table during the bone scan. There is a camera above and below the table. The cameras will scan you slowly from head to toe. It is important to hold still during the bone scan. You will have a pillow for your head and a pillow under your knees for your comfort. The technologist will give you instructions during the test. The bone scan does not hurt. You will feel a prick when the liquid is injected.

How long will the test take?

When you arrive for your appointment you will get the liquid injected into a vein. This will take a few minutes. You will need to return 3 to 5 hours later. The bone scan will then start and will take about 1 hour.

How do you get to your test?

If you are being seen at National Jewish Health, your appointment is in the Institute for Advanced Biomedical Imaging (Radiology). You will be directed where to go when you check-in. If you have any questions you can contact Advanced Biomedical Imaging (Radiology) at 303-398-1611.

Visit our website for more information about support groups, clinical trials and lifestyle information.

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NOTE: This information is provided to you as an educational service of National Jewish Health. It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

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