

FACTSHEET



This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: <https://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/fact-sheets/feedback-form>.

Nuclear Medicine Bone Scan

What is a nuclear medicine bone scan?

A bone scan can be used to assess the blood supply to bones and any areas of the bones which are trying to heal themselves.

A bone scan can help assess various conditions such as:

- Unexplained back or bone pain
- Infections
- Arthritis
- Slipped femoral heads
- Fractures and trauma
- Tumors
- Bone Cysts

How can I prepare my child for a nuclear medicine bone scan?

There is no special preparation for a bone scan; your child may eat and drink prior to the test.

It is helpful if you:

- Explain to them why the test is needed and reassure them that you'll be with them every step of the procedure.
- Bring along their favorite toy, movie, object that provides them comfort (blanket, teddy, dummy etc.).
- Arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment if your child needs numbing cream for injection site.

What happens during a nuclear medicine bone scan?

In the scanning room, your child will lie on the scanning bed and may be wrapped in a blanket with Velcro seatbelts to help them keep still (movement can ruin the images).

Your child will be given an injection, into a vein, of a special substance called a radiotracer. This injection gives off a small amount of radiation that can be detected by the specialized cameras.

The injection is given while your child is lying under the camera and the initial scan is started. This part of the scan takes around 20 minutes.

It takes two hours for the radiotracer to be taken up by the bones before the final scan can be done. You will be



able to leave and return at the time given to you by the Nuclear Medicine Scientist. In this period your child can eat, drink and do everything that they normally do.

When you return for the final scan, your child will be asked to either empty their bladder or you will need to change their nappy.

The final scan takes around 45 minutes to an hour. This part of the scan may also include a low dose CT scan at the end of their nuclear medicine imaging. This CT scan can help Nuclear Medicine Doctors give a more accurate diagnosis.

You will be able to stay with your child throughout the imaging procedure. Your child will be able to watch TV shows, a movie or listen to music whilst the images are being taken.

Will my child feel anything during a nuclear medicine bone scan?

Your child may experience some discomfort with the insertion of the small intravenous injection. This can be minimised - with the application of a numbing cream 20 minutes prior to the scan. If Child Life Therapy services are available, they may be able to help distract your child while they have their injection / scan.

During the scans your child will not feel anything. The camera does come quite close but will not touch your child.

Is a nuclear medicine bone scan safe?

During this procedure, your child will be exposed to a small amount of radiation. The benefits of finding an injury or disease are generally much greater than the potential risk from receiving a small dose of radiation. Allergic reactions are very rare and almost always mild. Your treating doctor should discuss these with you prior to your treatment.

What happens after the scan?

Once the images have been taken and checked by one of the doctors or Nuclear Medicine Scientists, you will be able to leave.

The results take a bit of time for to analyse and report on.

The findings will be sent to your referring doctor.