

Bone Scan

What is a Bone Scan?

Note: Child-friendly language in green.

- A bone scan is a nuclear medicine study of the bones in your child's body.
- This scan will create pictures of your child's bones, including detailed information about cellular activity.
- In nuclear medicine studies, patients are given a very small amount of radioisotope (**picture water**) which travels to the part of the body the doctors want to examine.
- In this study, a large gamma camera creates pictures of your child's bones using the radioisotope.

Why is it done?

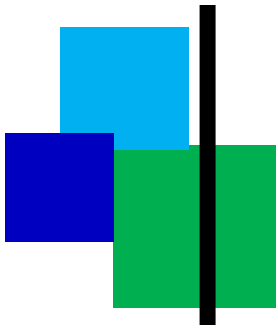
- A bone scan is used to diagnose causes of bone pain including fractures, infections, or other bone problems.

What can I do to help my child?

- Child life specialists are available to help your child better understand and cope with the scan.
- Parents/caregivers are also encouraged to be with their child during the scan, though there are some exceptions. Pregnant women may need to limit their time around a child that has been injected with a radioisotope.
- Please ask a staff member for more information about these options for support!



Nuclear medicine scanner



What should I expect during the procedure?

The entire test takes about 2-3 hours and is done in three stages.

Stage 1: Getting Ready

- For a bone scan, your child will be given an injection of a small amount of radioisotopes (picture water) through a vein.
- First, your child will lie down on the camera bed, and a nurse or technologist (person who will help take the pictures) will then look for the best place to give the injection and wash this area with a cool sponge.
 - * Infants and young children may be wrapped in blankets to help them lie still during the injection and/or pictures.
 - * Let your child know that his/her job is to hold his/her arm very still.
- Next, a technologist will place a small needle into a vein in your child's arm or hand to inject the isotope (picture water). Once the radioisotope is injected, the needle is removed.
 - * Your child may feel a bit of discomfort when the needle is placed.
 - * Counting, singing a favorite song, and/or taking deep breaths may be helpful coping strategies.

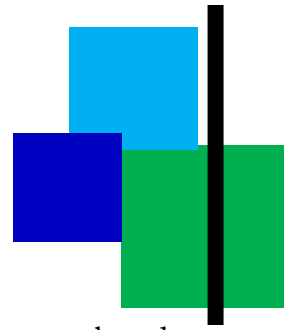
Stage 2: First Set of Pictures

- After the injection is given, the first set of pictures is taken, typically lasting about 5 minutes. The camera is positioned very close above your child's body. After a few minutes, the bed will begin to move very slowly out from under the camera.
 - * Let your child know the camera will come very close, but will not touch him/her.
- You and your child will be asked to come back 1.5 hours after the injection for a longer set of pictures.
 - * Your child can bring his/her favorite toy or game from home to help with the wait time.

Stage 3: Second Set of Pictures

- When it is time for the second set of pictures, your child will need to lie still on the camera bed the same way as before for about 30 minutes to an hour.
 - * You may sit or stand by your child's head to provide support and distraction. To help make this part easier, many children like to watch a movie. The child life team can provide DVDs and portable DVD players. Sedation is an option for those unable to hold still for the pictures. If your child is scheduled with sedation, a nurse will call you 1 or 2 days in advance in order to provide instructions as to how to prepare your child.

Tips for preparing your child for a Bone Scan



Infants (0-12 months old):

- Remember you are the most important thing to your child. Your presence will help them feel as safe and secure as possible.
- Take care of yourself too. If you are prepared mentally and physically, you will be more relaxed around your child.
- Bring familiar objects that comfort your child such as a favorite blanket, toy or pacifier.
- Remember that children use many different ways to cope. Crying is a healthy and normal way for children to cope because it allows them to express their emotions.

Toddlers (1-3 years old):

- Begin preparing your child the day before.
- Let your child know that he or she will have special pictures taken, so the doctor can learn about his or her body.
- Use simple words to describe what your child may experience.
- Reassure your child that you will be close.
- Bring comfort items with you that help your child feel safe, such as a favorite toy or blanket.
- Toddlers are learning to be independent and make their own choices; offer them realistic choices. For example, “What stuffed animal should we bring?”

Preschoolers (3-5 years old):

- Begin preparing your child about 1-3 days in advance.
- Talk to your child about why they are having pictures taken. For example, “The doctors will be taking special pictures of inside your body to learn more about how your body works.”
- Let your child know that he/she will get picture water first, which helps the pictures be bright and clear. Talk about ways to help make this “quick poke” part easier such as pretending to blow out birthday candles or counting.
- Tell your child that it is his or her big job to hold very still during the pictures, so that the pictures don’t turn out blurry.
- Remind your child that the special big camera doesn’t touch or hurt kids.

School Age and Up (6 years old and up):

- Prepare your child at least a few days in advance.
- Talk to your child about why the doctor wants to take special pictures of inside his or her body. For example, for a younger child, “So the doctor can learn more about how your body works.” For an older child, “So the doctor can learn more detailed information about your bones.”
- Explain to your child what he or she might, see, hear and feel, in the order things will occur, using child-friendly and/or real terms, depending on your child’s age/preference.
- Talk to your child about different ways to cope. Some children like to know everything that is happening during the exam, and some want to direct their attention elsewhere. Remind them that either way is okay.
- Encourage your child/teen to ask questions.

Child Life

Children's National Hospital Department of Radiology is staffed with Certified Child Life Specialists. Child life specialists are trained to address the emotional and developmental needs of children and their families during healthcare experiences and can provide procedural preparation and support before and during your child's exam.

Contact Information

If you would like to speak to a child life specialist before your child's radiology appointment, please call **202-476-3338** or email **childliferadiology@childrensnational.org**.

Created by Children's National Child Life Services