



What is DXA?

Dual X-Ray Absorptiometry, formally known as DEXA, is an enhanced form of x-ray that measures a patient's bone mineral density. The x-ray beam used has two different energy peaks which are absorbed differently by bone and soft tissue. The amount absorbed by the soft tissue can be subtracted from the total amount to give us the bone mineral density.

Which patients should receive a DXA scan?

- Women age 65 or older
- Patients with broken bone after age 50
- Menopausal women under age 65 with other risk factors
- Postmenopausal women under age 65 with other risk factors
- Patients with a loss of height of more than ½ inch in one year

Risk factors for developing Osteoporosis.

- Smoking
- Physical inactivity
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Patients diagnosed with primary hyperparathyroidism
- Weight loss or low body weight, small boned body frame
- Long term use of steroid- type medications such as prednisone or cortisone
- Vitamin D deficiency, which can occur as a result of certain medical conditions

Does medical insurance cover DXA scans?

Medicare Part B covers DXA scans once every 24 months (more often if medically necessary) for people who meet one or more of these conditions:

- A person who has been diagnosed with primary hyperparathyroidism
- A person taking prednisone or steroid-type drugs or is planning to begin treatment
- A person who is being monitored to see if their osteoporosis drug therapy is working
- A person whose X-Rays show possible osteoporosis, osteopenia, or vertebral fractures
- A woman whose doctor determines she is estrogen deficient and at risk for osteoporosis, based on her medical history and other findings

Most commercial insurance plans follow Medicare guidelines, however patients should check with their individual insurance company. Some Medicaid plans (Community Health Plan of Washington) require prior authorization for DXA scans.

DXA scans/CPT codes

- 77080 – Axial skeleton, 1 or more sites (e.g., hips, pelvis, spine)
- 77081 – Appendicular skeletons (peripheral) (e.g., radius, wrist, heel)
- 77085 – Axial skeleton (e.g., hips, pelvis, spine) including vertebral fracture assessment
- 77086 – Vertebral fracture assessment via dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry