What is DEXA?
A DEXA (also known as Bone Density Scans or Osteoporosis Screenings) or DXA (Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry) scan is the most commonly used test for measuring bone mineral density (BMD) and it is one of the most accurate ways to diagnose osteopenia and osteoporosis. Osteoporosis involves a gradual loss of calcium, causing the bones to become thinner, more fragile and more likely to break.

How does it work?
DEXA exams estimate the amount of bone mineral content in specific areas of your body. DEXA scans measure the amount of X-rays that are absorbed by the bones in your body. Two X-ray energies allow the radiologist to tell the difference between bone and soft tissue, giving a very accurate estimation of bone density. Often confused with a nuclear medicine bone scan, a bone density scan is faster and does not require a radionuclide injection.

What should I expect?
You will be asked to lie very still on the scan table and you will be able to breathe normally throughout the procedure. A scanner arm will pass over the area of interest. A dual energy beam of X-ray passes through your body and is measured by a detector in the scanner arm. An exam usually consists of scans of the spine and hip. On average, it will take about twenty minutes for the entire exam.

How should I prepare?
Unless instructed otherwise, you may eat normally on the day of the exam, but avoid calcium supplements and vitamins the day of the exam. Also, avoid wearing any clothing with metal (including underwire bras). CT (or CAT) scans should not be scheduled for the same day as your DEXA scan. Oral contrast that is sometimes used in CT exams may interfere with the DEXA scan.

How do I get the results?
After your study, the images will be evaluated by one of our board-certified radiologists, with expertise in bone density testing. A final report will be sent to your doctor, who can then discuss the results with you in detail. Reports are also available on Radiology Ltd.’s patient portal, MyRad.