

New bone scanners to help prevent fractures and cut waiting times

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Patients across England will benefit from new bone scanners to diagnose fragile bones earlier and prevent painful, life-changing fractures.

- 20 new bone scanners to speed up diagnosis of osteoporosis and other bone conditions across England.
- Tens of thousands of patients - particularly women at higher risk - to benefit from earlier treatment and fewer life-changing fractures.
- Builds on first wave of new scanners already in use, helping cut waiting times and prevent illness earlier.

Tens of thousands of patients at risk of osteoporosis and other bone conditions will get faster access to vital bone scans, as 20 new scanners are rolled out across England.

The new machines will help diagnose fragile bones earlier and prevent painful, life-changing fractures - particularly among older people and women, who are disproportionately affected by osteoporosis.

The funding covers six additional scanners to expand capacity and 14 replacement machines to modernise outdated equipment with improved image quality for patients. It builds on the first wave of 13 scanners announced last year, 10 of which are already in use and helping patients start treatment sooner. Last year (2025), over 16,000 extra DEXA scans were delivered compared to year prior (2024).

Health and Social Care Secretary Wes Streeting said:

Too many women are suffering painful, preventable fractures because osteoporosis is diagnosed too late. That has to change.

These new scanners will help thousands of patients get tested sooner, start treatment earlier and avoid the trauma of life-changing breaks.

We are cutting waiting times and modernising the NHS so it works for patients - preventing illness where we can, and delivering care faster for those that need it most.

Dr Lesley Kay, NHS National Clinical Director for Musculoskeletal Conditions, said:

Osteoporosis and other bone conditions can have a devastating effect on patients, so improving access to this specialist technology will make a real difference to people's lives.

These scanners are the diagnostic gold standard and now tens of thousands more people will be diagnosed at an early stage and treated more quickly, as well as prevented from suffering broken bones.

Osteoporosis affects millions of people in the UK but women are at far greater risk, especially after the menopause. Fractures linked to weak bones can lead to loss of independence, long hospital stays and reduced quality of life. Earlier diagnosis means patients can begin medication and make lifestyle changes to strengthen bones and reduce the risk of breaks.

Ahead of International Women's Day, the expansion marks a significant step forward in tackling a condition that too often goes undiagnosed until a serious fracture occurs.

The scanners - known as DEXA (dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry) machines - measure bone density and are the gold standard for diagnosing osteoporosis and assessing fracture risk.

Craig Jones, Chief Executive of the Royal Osteoporosis Society, said:

We welcome this investment in DEXA scanners, which will expand access to bone density testing and deliver on the Government's election commitment to 15,000 additional scans each year. Early diagnosis is essential.

To ensure every scan leads to effective treatment and fracture prevention, it will now be vital to publish the implementation plan for nationwide Fracture Liaison Services, so patients can move seamlessly from diagnosis to care.

The £2.6 million investment supports the government's 10 Year Health Plan to cut waiting times, modernise diagnostic services and shift the NHS from treating sickness to preventing illness.

Early diagnosis not only protects patients from harm but also reduces pressure on hospitals and emergency services, where fragility fractures account for significant admissions each year.

The government will continue working with the NHS and partners to strengthen bone health services - from early diagnosis and fracture prevention to follow-up care - so patients receive the right support, wherever they live.

Society of Radiographers President, Katie Thompson, said:

The Society of Radiographers welcomes the government's investment in 20 new DEXA scanners, recognising the important role this will play in strengthening bone health services and supporting faster, more accurate diagnosis across England. This announcement represents a positive step toward earlier identification of osteoporosis and improved prevention of avoidable, life-altering fractures.

However, achieving meaningful impact requires more than new equipment. Recent assessments show that many bone health services / fracture liaison services, are already under significant pressure, with rising demand placing additional strain on existing teams. To ensure this investment delivers its full benefit, it must be accompanied by sustained support for the radiography workforce — including diagnostic radiographers and radiography assistant practitioners, whose expertise is critical to safe, effective service delivery.

With appropriate workforce investment, this programme can deliver long-term improvements for patients and the wider healthcare system as part of the required investment in fracture liaison services.

Marion Dickson OBE, executive director of Clinical Support and Cancer Services at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, said:

Securing funding for a DEXA scanner at our Hexham General Hospital site is fantastic news for our patients and staff.

Patients who need a bone density scan currently have to travel from across the wide area we serve to access this service at North Tyneside General Hospital or Wansbeck General Hospital. For many, especially those with mobility issues or long-term conditions, this can understandably be challenging.

Having a DEXA scanner in Hexham means more convenient access to the specialist care our communities deserve. It will help us deliver more patient centred care and improve the overall experience for everyone who relies on us.

Louise Koplick, Radiology Team Manager at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust said:

The new scanner at Seacroft Hospital will provide a real boost to DXA services and offer patients in our East Leeds communities the option of a bone density test close to home.

The new fleet of scanners has enabled us to scan over 7,000 patients this year and the addition of one more in Seacroft will relieve capacity at Leeds General Infirmary and Wharfedale Hospital where the others are located. With the latest technology, we can provide scanning options which reduce the need for additional spine x-rays and will support fracture liaison services across the city.

Background

20 New DEXA scanners funded in 2025/26:

- North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust
- West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
- Barts Health NHS Trust
- Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
- University Hospital Birmingham NHS Trust
- University Hospital Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust
- Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
- Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Humber Health Partnership
- Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
- Northumbria-healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust
- Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust
- Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust
- Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust
- Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

- Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust

10 DEXA scanners funded in 2024/25 and currently live:

- Mid Yorkshire Teaching NHS Trust
- Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust
- Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
- Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
- The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-bone-scanners-to-help-prevent-fractures-and-cut-waiting-times>