Triple Phase Bone Scan

A triple phase bone scan can show early bone disease, infection or fractures. In many cases, the test can detect these conditions before being seen on standard X-rays. The test is done in the Nuclear Medicine department. This bone scan uses a small amount of radioactive material (tracer) that is absorbed into the bones. The amount of radiation used in this test is small, and well within limits that are not harmful. Your total test time is about 5 hours, but there is a 2- to 3-hour break between the first and second portions of the test.

Before the Test

There is no special preparation for this test. On the day of the test, please come to the 8th floor reception desk in the Galter Pavilion, 201 East Huron Street, at your scheduled appointment time. Be sure to bring:

- Your doctor’s written order for the test if one was given to you
- Photo ID
- Medical insurance information
- Medicare card (Medicare patients only)

Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from the Feinberg and Galter pavilions. For discounted rates, please bring your parking ticket with you. Tickets can be validated at the Customer Services Desks on the 1st, 2nd and 8th floors of the Feinberg and Galter pavilions; 1st floor of Prentice (including the Prentice 24-hour desk near the Superior entrance).

During the Test

When you arrive in the Nuclear Medicine Department, a nurse or technologist (tech) will ask you questions about your medical history. If you think you might be pregnant or are breastfeeding, please tell the tech before you are given any injection.

You will then be given an IV (into the vein) injection of a radioactive tracer while pictures are being taken of the suspected area of fracture or infection. The tech will ask you to return to the Nuclear Medicine Department about 2 to 3 hours later. This time is needed for the tracer to localize into your bones. When you return, it will take about 2 hours to obtain the images needed for the test.
You will be asked to empty your bladder. This is done so that the pelvic and hip areas show up more clearly. You will then be asked to lie on a table and a total body image will be taken. The radiologist will review your bone scan before you are cleared to leave. It is likely that extra images will need to be taken to obtain more detailed views.

**After the Test**

You may resume your normal activities and diet. The injection you were given is not harmful and becomes non-radioactive within hours. Talk with your doctor about your test results. You may obtain a copy of your test results a week after the test from Medical Records. Medical Records is located on the 2nd floor of the Galter Pavilion. If you have any questions regarding your instructions for this test, please call the Nuclear Medicine department at 312.926.2320, Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 5 pm.

**Northwestern Medicine—Health Information Resources**

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.