

Bronson Heart Scan

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Bronson Heart Scan?

It's a new way to detect your heart attack risk — before you display any symptoms. This painless, non-invasive screening test uses computed tomography (also known as CT) to detect calcium buildup in the arteries of your heart — an early indicator of heart disease.

Why is it important to have a Heart Scan?

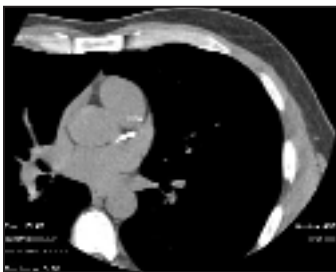
According to the American Heart Association, 50 percent of men and 64 percent of women who died suddenly of coronary heart disease had no previous symptoms. The Bronson Heart Scan is a screening test that identifies heart disease *before* you have any symptoms — or a heart attack. By taking this simple test, you can know *now*, whether or not you have heart disease while you still have time to improve your heart health and lower your risk of having a potentially fatal heart attack.

How is the Bronson Heart Scan different from other types of cardiac tests?

A cholesterol test can only tell you if you are *at risk* for heart disease — the Bronson Heart Scan is different because it shows whether or not you *actually have* heart disease in a non-invasive way.

What does the Bronson Heart Scan show me?

The Bronson Heart Scan shows if you have a buildup of calcium in your heart arteries — an early indicator of heart disease. In the examples that follow, the solid white areas show calcification in the arteries:



Scores from 11 to 399, like this image, are Moderate-Risk.



Scores above 400, like this image, are High-Risk.

The higher the number, the greater the person's risk of having a heart attack.

What is the accuracy of the test? Is it a proven technology?

Studies show coronary calcium is an indicator of actual heart disease, regardless of other risk factors. The greater the amount of calcium present, the greater the likelihood of heart disease. A high calcium

score may be consistent with a moderate to high risk of a heart attack in the next two to five years. In patients with a score of zero, the presence of dangerous plaque is very unlikely.

What is the difference between hard and soft plaque?

Hard plaque is calcified and stable, while soft plaque is unstable. The Bronson Heart Scan detects hard, calcified plaque only.

Who can benefit from this screening?

The Bronson Heart Scan is recommended for men age 35 and older or women age 45 and older with any of the following risk factors:

- family history of heart disease
- high blood pressure or cholesterol
- smoking
- peripheral vascular disease
- over ideal body weight
- diabetes

People who do not meet this criteria, who are pregnant, who already know they have heart disease or who weigh more than 300 pounds should not take the test. The Bronson Heart Scan is not recommended for people over age 70.

How do I know if I have a risk factor for heart disease?

To determine if you have risk factors for heart disease, please take the free Bronson Online Heart Risk Assessment at bronsonhealth.com. Or, talk with your doctor. If you do not have a doctor, call Bronson HealthAnswers at (269) 341-7723 for assistance finding one.

What if I have problems taking the Bronson Online Heart Risk Assessment?

The Bronson Online Heart Risk Assessment will not work on a Mac computer or on Firefox, an internet browser for the Mac.

It is not necessary for you to take the Bronson Online Heart Risk Assessment prior to your heart scan appointment as a counselor will walk you through the assessment during the counseling session immediately following the scan.

Do I need a doctor's referral or order for the Heart Scan?

You may schedule this screening yourself without a physician referral. However, you may wish to consult with your doctor before taking the test. Test results will be sent to your primary care physician with your permission. (*continued*)

What does it cost?

The cost of the test is \$200 and is not currently covered by most insurance companies. The test includes all technical, medical and professional interpretation charges as well as a personalized report of your heart disease risk. Payment may be made by cash, check or credit card at the time of registration.

How long does the appointment take?

The average wait time in registration is just three minutes and the actual test takes less than one minute to perform. The counseling session immediately after the test could take up to 20 minutes, depending on the number of questions you have. The entire process — from registration to test completion — takes only about a half hour.

Do I need to prepare for this test?

Yes. We ask that you **do not smoke, consume caffeine or exercise for six to eight hours before your test.** Your heart rate must be below 90 BPM. If your heart rate is higher than 90 BPM, your test will be rescheduled. It is helpful, but not necessary, to take the Bronson Online Heart Risk Assessment and bring a copy of the report to your appointment.

In order to complete the Bronson Online Heart Risk Assessment, you should have your most current blood pressure and cholesterol numbers.

If you are unable to take the Bronson Online Heart Risk Assessment ahead of time, a counselor will walk you through the assessment.

What should I expect during the test?

You may be asked to change into a patient gown for this test. All patients will need to remove any metal above the waist, including undergarments and jewelry. No needles, sedation or other medications are used during this test so there is no recovery time.

During this test, you will be asked to lie on a special scanning table for a few minutes while a CT scanner quickly moves over your chest area and takes hundreds of X-ray images from a variety of angles. A computer combines the images to create a two-dimensional, detailed picture of your heart and blood vessels. A technologist then analyzes the images for the presence of calcification within the heart arteries. Following the scan, a counselor will review your results with you; tell you whether you are at a low, moderate or high risk for heart disease; and recommend any needed follow-up steps. Immediately following the test, you will receive a preliminary report to take with you. A radiologist will conduct a final review of your results and a final report will be sent to your physician with your permission.

What if my test results are abnormal?

Immediately after the test, you will receive a preliminary report that will indicate if you are at low, moderate or high risk of having a heart attack in the next two to five years. Based on your test results, you may need to follow-up with your physician for further evaluation. If you have given permission, your doctor will receive a copy of your test results. If you do not have a physician, you will be encouraged to call Bronson HealthAnswers at (269) 341-7723 to find a primary care doctor to coordinate your follow-up care.

Will I be able to get a picture of my heart?

If calcium buildup is detected, you will receive a picture of your heart immediately after the scan. If you do not have calcium buildup (i.e., your score is 0), you will not receive a picture of your heart.

Is the Bronson Heart Scan covered by insurance?

Because this CT scan is a screening test, it is not currently covered by insurance. You may want to call your insurance provider to inquire. The cost of the test is \$200 and includes all technical, medical and professional interpretation charges as well as a personalized report of your heart disease risk. Payment may be made by cash, check or credit card at the time of registration.

Is this the “Whole Body Scan” that has been shown in the media?

No. Most people will not benefit from a general scan of the body unless there is a specific problem to be addressed.

How often should I have this test?

The minimal interval between calcium scans is five years.

Are there any risks to having this screening?

There is a small risk from the brief exposure to radiation. The exposure is equivalent to 100-150 chest X-rays — about the same as other types of CT scans.

However, the benefit of knowing if your heart is healthy outweighs the risk, especially if you are a man over age 35 or a woman over age 45 with at least one risk factor. Women who are pregnant will not be scheduled for this test.

Who performs this test?

A technologist with special training in CT performs the test. The results are then reviewed and confirmed by a board-certified radiologist (a physician who specializes in medical imaging). You will be notified by mail if the results are different than the preliminary report and a copy will be sent to your primary care physician with your permission. (*continued*)

Where is this test performed?

The Bronson Heart Scan is offered at Bronson Out-patient Testing, which is located on the first floor next to the main entrance to Bronson Methodist Hospital's South Campus at 601 John Street in downtown Kalamazoo. Parking is available in the Vine Street Parking Ramp located on the corner of Vine and John Streets.

I want to give the Bronson Heart Scan as a gift. Is there a gift certificate available?

Yes. Gift certificates for the Bronson Heart Scan may be purchased for \$200 during regular business hours in the Cashier's Office, located on the first floor of the Medical Office Pavilion, or over the phone by calling 341-6365. Payment by cash, check or credit card is due at the time of purchase.

Where can I get more information?

If you have questions about the Bronson Heart Scan, visit our website at bronsonhealth.com. You can also call (269) 34-HEART [(269) 344-3278] for more information. We welcome your questions weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

How do I schedule this test?

To schedule your Bronson Heart Scan, please call (269) 34-HEART [(269) 344-3278] weekdays between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.