

Doctor's Bag



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WHAT IS BONE MINERAL DENSITY (BMD) TEST?

Most health care providers agree that postmenopausal women older than age 65 – as well as other individuals at risk for osteoporosis – should undergo BMD testing.

BMD tests are conducted using a machine that takes low-dose x-rays of the lower spine and hip while the patient is lying on a cushioned table. There are also portable BMD scanners that measure only the wrist or heel. While the portable scanners may be useful preliminary screening tools, bone density can differ in different areas of the body. The spine and hip scanner is considered the most reliable way to measure bone density.

The test is painless and in most cases, does not require the patient to undress.

BMD testing is the best way to confirm a diagnosis of osteoporosis. When repeated over time, it can be used to monitor the rate of bone loss as well as a patient's response to treatment.

Your personal physician can answer any questions you may have about osteoporosis and BMD testing. Also, please check with your benefit administrator to make sure your health plan provides coverage for bone mineral density tests.

NCPPOInfo YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

Bone Health and Osteoporosis

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis means "porous bone." It is a disease of the skeletal system characterized by low bone mass and the deterioration of bone tissue. The condition increases the risk on bone fractures typically in the hip, wrist and spine.



Who is at Risk?

Men, women and even children can develop osteoporosis but it is most prevalent among the following groups:

- Post-menopausal Caucasian females
- Older adults
- Individuals who are small in body size
- Individuals who eat a diet low in calcium
- Physically inactive persons

How to Minimize the Risk of Osteoporosis

A person with high bone mass as a young adult will be more likely to have sufficient bone mass later in life. That's why it is important to build strong bones as early as possible with regular exercise and proper diet.

Exercise – including weight-bearing physical activity – is a great way to keep bones healthy. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Dietary Guidelines for Americans, children should get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity per day, and adults should get 30 minutes per day. Some simple bone-strengthening exercises include walking, jogging, stair climbing, jumping rope and dancing.

Calcium helps the body develop healthy bones, teeth, heart, muscles and nerves. The human body cannot produce this mineral on its own, so it's important to get enough calcium in one's diet. Good sources of calcium include:

- Dairy products – low fat or nonfat milk, cheese, yogurt
- Dark green leafy vegetables – turnip greens, broccoli, spinach
- Calcium-fortified foods – orange juice, cereal, bread, soy beverages and tofu
- Nuts – almonds

The recommended amount of calcium depends on age and medical condition as well as certain factors such as pregnancy and breastfeeding. In general, pre-teens, teenagers and older adults need more calcium in the diet than other age groups.

An excellent resource for information about osteoporosis is the National Osteoporosis Foundation's website, www.nof.org.

DidUKnow?

The following statistics are from the National Osteoporosis Foundation:

- In the U.S., 10 million individuals are estimated to have osteoporosis and almost 34 million more are estimated to be at increased risk due to low bone mass.
- Of the 10 million Americans estimated to have the disease, eight million are women and two million are men.
- Women can lose up to 20 percent of their bone mass in the five to seven years after menopause, making them more susceptible to osteoporosis.
- Fractures due to osteoporosis are most likely in the hip, spine and wrist, but any bone can be affected.
- Women with a hip fracture are four times more likely to have a second hip fracture than women who have not had one.
- While osteoporosis is often thought of as an older person's disease, it can strike at any age.
- About 85-90 percent of adult bone mass is acquired by age 18 in girls and age 20 in boys.
- Building strong bones during childhood and adolescence is key to helping prevent osteoporosis later in life.

Newsletter Information Sources

National Osteoporosis Foundation (nof.org) "Fast Facts on Osteoporosis," 2008

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov) "Calcium and Bone Health," 09/08

MedlinePlus (www.nlm.nih.gov) "Bone Mineral Density Test," 04/08

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