

Bone density scan

What is a bone density Scan?

To accurately detect osteoporosis, doctors commonly use bone densitometry to measure bone mineral density (BMD). Bone densitometry is a quick, painless procedure for measuring bone loss. Measurement of the lower spine and hips are most often done.

What are some common uses of this procedure?

Bone densitometry is commonly used to diagnose osteoporosis, a condition that often affects women after menopause but may also be found in men. Osteoporosis involves a gradual loss of calcium, causing bones to thin, become more fragile, and more likely to break.

The bone density test can also assess your risk for developing fractures and is effective in tracking the effects of treatment for osteoporosis and other conditions that can cause bone loss. Bone density testing is recommended for:

- post-menopausal women age 60 or older who have risk factors for developing osteoporosis
- patients with a personal or maternal history of hip fracture or smoking
- post-menopausal women who are tall (over 5 feet 7 inches) or thin (less than 125 pounds)
- men and women who have hyperparathyroidism
- men and women who have been medications that are known to cause bone loss for an extended period of time

How should I prepare for this procedure?

- Refrain from taking calcium supplements for at least 24 hours beforehand.
- Wear comfortable clothing and avoid garments that have zippers, belts or buttons made of metal.
- Let your technologist know if you've recently had a barium examination or have been injected with a contrast material for a CT or radioisotope scan.
- Let your technologist know if there is a possibility you are pregnant.

What should I expect during this examination?

Depending on the equipment used and the parts of the body being examined, the test takes between 10 and 30 minutes.

- You may be asked to undress and put on a gown.
- You'll lie on a padded table with a detector (an imaging device) above. It is important that you remain as still as possible during the procedure to ensure a clear and useful image.
- The detector is scanned over the area, generating images on a computer monitor.

What will I experience during this examination?

Bone densitometry is a simple, painless, and non-invasive procedure. Once on the examination table, you may be asked to remain still for a short period of time while the machine takes measurements.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

The results of a bone density examination are interpreted by a radiologist and forwarded to your doctor. Your test results will be in the form of scores:

T score - This number shows the amount of bone you have compared to a young adult of the same gender with peak bone mass. A score above -1 is considered normal. A score between -1 and -2.5 is classified as osteopenia, the first stage of bone loss. A score below -2.5 is defined as osteoporosis. It is used to estimate your risk of developing a fracture.

Web Resources

[About Osteoporosis](#)

[Measure your risk of broken bones](#)

For more information on this topic, please visit www.Radiologyinfo.org.