

## FAQs About Bone Density Testing



**Q:** Will the exam hurt?

**a:** No, there is no pain associated with the test. You will be lying on your back for about 10-15 minutes. If you can't safely lie on your back, are not able to transfer onto the table or if your weight (350 lbs.) exceeds the table limit, we may scan your forearm instead from a chair.

**Q:** Is the exam safe?

**a:** Yes, bone densitometry uses only minimal radiation. The amount is so small that the technologist stays in the room with you. The dose is about 1/10 of a chest x-ray. If you think you may be pregnant, please let your doctor and technologist know.

**Q:** Can I eat and take my medications before the exam?

**a:** Yes, you may eat as you normally would. Please do take your regular prescription medications. However, do not take your vitamins, calcium supplements and Tums/Roloids the morning of your exam. If you need an antacid, you can take liquid Mylanta or Pepto Bismol.

**Q:** What should I wear?

**a:** Wear comfortable clothing, but please refrain from wearing underwire bras or any clothing with metal snaps or zippers around the waist.

**Q:** Is there any special preparation?

**a:** No special preparation is required for bone density testing.

**Q:** How long does the exam take?

**a:** The complete exam should take about 15-20 minutes.

**Q:** What does the bone density test determine?

**a:** This test measures your bone mineral density (BMD). The lower your bone mineral density is, the greater the risk of a fracture. The test is used to:

- Detect low bone density before a person breaks a bone
- Predict a person's chances of breaking a bone in the future
- Confirm a diagnosis of osteoporosis when a person has already broken a bone
- Determine whether a person's bone density is increasing, decreasing or remaining stable
- Monitor a person's response to treatment

**Q:** What happens during the exam?

**a:** During a bone density exam, all you need to do is lie on your back and let the technologist and the machine do the work. As you are lying on a padded cushion, scans are taken of your spine and hip to determine your density.

**Q:** When will I receive my results?

**a:** Your results are sent to your referring physician within a week of your appointment.

## Osteoporosis and Bone Density Testing

**EWBC**

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Breast Care

Breast Imaging Excellence



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## What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disorder in which the bones become increasingly porous, brittle and subject to fracture, owing to loss of calcium and other mineral components. It sometimes results in pain, decreased height and skeletal deformities that are common in older persons, primarily postmenopausal women. Osteoporosis is also associated with long-term steroid therapy and certain endocrine disorders.

- The most common bones to break or fracture are those of the spine, hip and wrist — bones can break even from a minor injury
- Women can lose up to 20% of their bone mass in five to seven years after menopause
- This disorder eliminates one's bone strength without causing any signs or symptoms

## Osteoporosis Prevention

- Adequate calcium and vitamin D intake
- Regular exercise
- Appropriate levels of estrogen in women and testosterone in men
- Nutritious diet
- Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol use
- Talk to your healthcare provider about bone health
- Have a bone density test and take medication when appropriate



While osteoporosis is often thought of as an older person's disease, it can strike at any age.

## Risk Factors for Osteoporosis

**GENDER** — Women are more likely to develop this disorder, although men are also susceptible.

**AGE** — The longer you live, the more susceptible you become to the disease.

**HEREDITY** — Individuals with a family history of osteoporosis or fractures are more likely to develop the disorder.

**BODY SIZE** — Small boned, thin women and men are at more risk, but bigger bone size is no guarantee that you will not get osteoporosis.

**ETHNICITY** — Caucasians, Asian and Hispanic/Latino descent are at a higher risk.

**HORMONE LEVELS** — Early menopause can increase a woman's likelihood of developing the disease.

**DIET** — Inadequate calcium and vitamin D intake, as well as excessive protein, sodium and caffeine intake, are harmful to bone health.

**EXERCISE** — Individuals who are less physically active are at higher risk.

**LIFESTYLE CHOICES** — Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption are not healthy for your body, especially your bones.

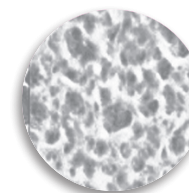
**CERTAIN DISEASES AND CONDITIONS** — Anorexia nervosa, rheumatoid arthritis and gastrointestinal diseases may contribute to osteoporosis.



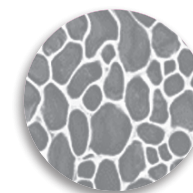
## Bone Density Testing

A specialized test, called a bone mineral density (BMD) test, measures the density of bone in various parts of the body.

Testing used at EWBC to measure bone density is the DXA\* (Dual Energy X-Ray Absorptiometry). This test measures the bone mineral density of the spine and hip. Once you have your test, your results are sent to the physician who ordered it.



healthy bone



brittle bone

\*Medicare reimburses for bone density testing every two years. Other insurances usually follow Medicare guidelines.

## Who Should Be Tested?

- Postmenopausal women under age 65 with one or more risk factors for osteoporosis
- Men age 50-70 with one or more risk factors for osteoporosis
- Women age 65 or older without risk factors
- Men age 70 or older without risk factors
- A woman or man after age 50 who has a broken bone and a history of fractures
- Women going through menopause with certain risk factors
- Postmenopausal women who have stopped taking estrogen therapy or hormone therapy

For more information, check out the National Osteoporosis Foundation website at [www.nof.org](http://www.nof.org)