

BMD TESTING



Answers to commonly asked questions regarding BMD testing ...



What is a BMD test?

A bone mineral density (BMD) test is a fast, safe, and painless way for your doctor to determine possible bone loss. As you age, bones become less solid, less dense. If bones thin too much they become fragile and more likely to break. A BMD test will help predict your risk for breaking bones. A BMD test is simple—most of the time, you won't even have to undress. And the test is usually over in a matter of minutes.



Why should I get a BMD test?

You should get a BMD test to determine if you have thinning bones or may have osteoporosis. BMD testing is recommended for:

- ✓ All women age 65 and older
- ✓ Younger women who have begun, or gone through, menopause and have one or more risk factors which include:
 - Smoking
 - Use of certain medications such as steroids and antiseizure medications to treat chronic medical conditions
 - Discontinuation of estrogen hormone therapy
 - Surgery to remove ovaries before menopause without estrogen treatment after the surgery
 - History of breaking a bone as an adult

Over time, a repeat bone density test can help your doctor track changes in bone structure. The results you receive from a bone density test are best understood with the help of your doctor. Therefore, it's important that you and your doctor discuss the results.

How is bone density tested?

Several types of bone density tests are available. All of these tests are quick, easy, and painless (they are performed outside your body). The tests guide your doctor in determining your risk of breaking a bone in critical areas, primarily the bones in your wrists, hips, and spine. BMD can be measured at a number of body sites, including the hip, spine, forearm, finger, or heel. BMD tests use a very low dose x-ray (less than a chest x-ray) or ultrasound. Examples of these testing machines are pictured below.



DEXA-This measures bone density in the hip or spine.



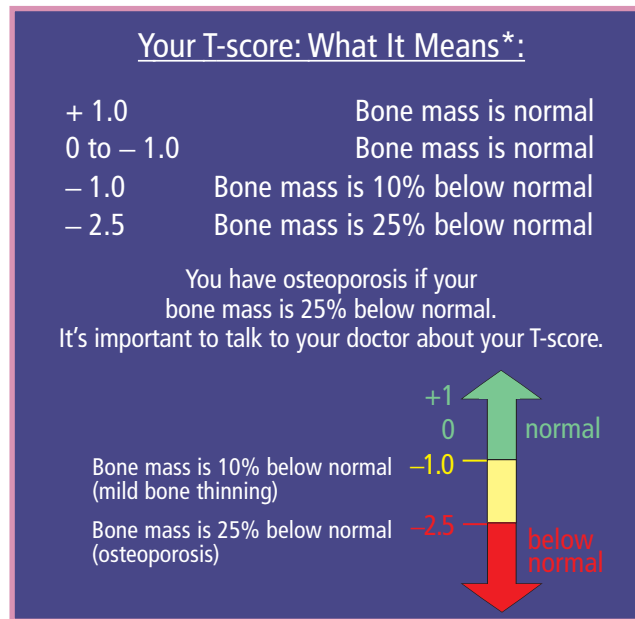
PIXI-This measures bone density in the heel and forearm.

What is a T-score and what do the BMD test results mean?

The result of your test is reported using what is called a T-score, and it's important to know what it means. Your T-score compares your bone mass with that of a population of normal young adult women.

It's important to talk with your doctor about your T-score and other risk factors. Both of you may feel that if your bone mass is below normal, you may want to take steps to help reverse your bone loss.

The accompanying chart helps illustrate the T-score and provides an aid for discussions with your doctor.



*Compared with a healthy young female.

If your T-score is -2.5 or below (for example, -3.0) and your doctor has told you that you have osteoporosis, it is important to discuss possible treatments to help reverse bone loss. Even at higher T-score levels (for example, -2.0) medication can sometimes be helpful and recommended. Your doctor can help you to decide which treatment options are right for you.



How will my doctor make use of these results?

Your doctor can make use of the results in several ways: to measure your bone loss, to help make a diagnosis of osteoporosis, to help with the decision about the need for any more tests, and to review possible treatments.



If my results show that I have low bone density, what can I do?

If you have osteoporosis or are at risk of getting osteoporosis, you and your doctor can decide whether there are changes you can make or treatments that are right for you. Some things that you can do now are:

- ✓ **Diet.** Make sure you're getting the recommended amounts of calcium and vitamin D every day. When your body doesn't get enough calcium, it takes the calcium it needs from your bones. And without enough vitamin D, you can't absorb calcium properly.
- ✓ **Exercise.** Perform a combination of weight-bearing and strength-training exercise on a regular basis. Brisk walking, jogging, dancing, hiking, and racquet sports are all examples of weight-bearing exercises. Strength-training programs incorporate the use of free weights, weight training machines or exercise bands. Talk with your doctor before beginning any exercise program. Ask him/her which exercise program would be best for you.
- ✓ **Lifestyle.** Stop smoking and avoid excess alcohol. These substances can contribute to bone loss.
- ✓ **Know the effects of medication.** Some medicines can contribute to bone loss, such as prednisone (used for conditions such as arthritis, asthma, and certain skin disorders). If you take these medicines, ask your doctor about bone-related side effects.
- ✓ **Take medication when prescribed by your doctor.** There are medications that are approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the prevention and/or treatment of osteoporosis.
- ✓ **Track your progress.** Your doctor will determine if follow-up BMD tests can help keep track of your bone health.



When should I get another bone density test?

Unlike other screening tests for women such as mammography, bone mineral density tests are rarely performed more than every 2 years and frequently the time between tests is longer because bone changes very slowly. Your doctor will advise you about how often bone density testing is right for you based on your medical history, your risk for osteoporosis and the results of previous bone mineral density tests.



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