



QUESTIONS QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ANSWERS

Bone Density Testing

These tests measure bone density (thickness) and bone loss. The results will show if you have Osteoporosis and are at risk for broken bones. In Osteoporosis the bones lose calcium. They become thinner and more likely to break. If untreated, it worsens over time.

There are two main ways to test for bone density. Both these tests are painless.

DEXA: This is a type of X-ray that measures bone density. Usually the bones in the hip and spine are tested. Bone loss shows up on the x-ray pictures.

CAT scan: This test is used for people who:

- have had spinal surgery
- have had broken bones in the spine
- have a spine that is not straight
- have a type of arthritis (osteoarthritis)

The CAT scan is also used to track how well the treatments for bone loss are working.

Who should have a bone density test?

Women who:

- have gone through the change of life (menopause) and:
- do not take estrogen
- have had a broken bone or a mother who had a broken hip
- had ovaries removed before age 45

- are over 5' 7" tall
- weight less than 125 pounds
- are elderly (age 65 and older)

Men who:

- have prostate cancer
- are elderly.

Patients with:

- type 1 diabetes
- kidney disease
- liver disease
- family history of osteoporosis
- thyroid or parathyroid conditions
- rheumatoid arthritis
- x-rays done for other reasons that show bone loss

Persons with these other risks for bone loss:

- taking steroids for a long period
- taking drugs for seizures
- smoking
- heavy drinking

Who should not have these tests?

- Pregnant women should wait until after the baby is born to have these tests.
- Persons who have had other CAT scans or barium enema tests. They should wait two weeks before having these tests.

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