

Osteoporosis: Bone Mass Density (BMD) Testing

Osteoporosis is a disorder resulting in an increased susceptibility to fractures in the hip, spine and wrist due to bone loss. It is often called the "silent thief" because the gradual loss of bone mass produces no signs or symptoms until a fracture occurs.

Bone Mass Density (BMD) Tests

Bone Mass Density (BMD) tests are the only way to predict your chance of breaking a bone due to osteoporosis. The tests are safe, painless and non-invasive. They evaluate bone density -- a measure of bone strength. With the information obtained from these tests, your doctor can predict the likelihood of future fractures and determine the most appropriate treatment.

Who Should Have a Bone Density Test?

Your doctor may suggest a Bone Mass Density test if you:

- Are deciding whether or not to start long-term estrogen replacement therapy
- Are taking steroid medications, like prednisone, for diseases such as asthma, arthritis, lupus, or Crohn's disease
- Have primary hyperthyroidism
- Have recently had a fracture in which osteoporosis was suspected
- Are monitoring the progress of an osteoporosis treatment
- Have multiple risk factors

Risk factors include:

- Female
- Small, thin frame
- Advanced age
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Early menopause
- Anorexia nervosa or bulimia
- Low calcium intake

- Use certain medications such as steroids, anticonvulsants, thyroid hormones, certain cancer treatments
 - Have low levels of testosterone (males)
 - A sedentary lifestyle
 - Smoke cigarettes/excessive alcohol intake
 - Malabsorption problems
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Sources for Article from Carilion Clinic: National Osteoporosis Foundation, Virginia Department of Health.

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