Patient Information
Tests and Procedures

DEXA Bone Density Scanning
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DEXA, or dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry, is an enhanced form of x-ray technology that is used to calculate bone loss. Most often performed on the lower spine and hips, DEXA is today's established standard for measuring bone mineral density (BMD) and is used to diagnose osteoporosis.

Some women are at greater risk for osteoporosis — the decrease of bone mass and density as a result of the depletion of bone calcium and protein — than others. Your doctor can help you determine your risk of developing osteoporosis by taking your personal and family medical history, and by performing a bone density test or bone mass measurement.

What is a bone density test?

A bone density test, also known as bone mass measurement or bone mineral density test, measures the strength and density of your bones as you approach menopause and, when the test is repeated sometime later, can help determine how quickly you are losing bone mass and density. These tests are painless, noninvasive, and safe. They compare your bone density with standards for what is expected in someone of your age, gender, and size, and to the optimal peak bone density of a healthy young adult of the same gender. Bone density testing can help to:

- Detect low bone density before a fracture occurs.
- Confirm a diagnosis of osteoporosis if you have already fractured.
- Predict your chances of fracturing in the future.
- Determine your rate of bone loss and/or monitor the effects of treatment if the test is conducted at intervals of a year or more.

What are some reasons for having a bone density test?

If you have 1 or more of the following risk factors for osteoporosis, you may want to consider having a bone density test:

- You have already experienced a bone fracture that may be the result of thinning bones.
- Your mother, grandmother, or another close relative had osteoporosis or bone fractures.
- Over a long period of time, you have taken medication that accelerates bone loss, such as corticosteroids for treating rheumatoid arthritis or other conditions, or some anti-seizure medications.
- You have low body weight, a slight build, or a light complexion.
- You have a history of cigarette smoking or heavy drinking

- See more at: http://www.healthlibrary.inspirahealthnetwork.org/85,P01503#sthash.YqYyvd9g.dpuf