

What Is Osteoporosis and why should I be concerned?

Osteoporosis is a debilitating disease that reduces the strength of your bones, causing them to become brittle and prone to fractures. Approximately 55% of people over the age of 50 have osteoporosis and are at risk of an osteoporosis-related fracture. A woman's risk of hip fracture alone is equal to the combined risk of developing breast, uterine, and ovarian cancer. Up to 20% of women who suffer hip fractures die within one year of the fracture due to complications. Of the 10 million estimated to have osteoporosis, eight million are women and two million are men. Eighty percent of those affected by osteoporosis are women and twenty percent are men.



Who is at risk?

Women who are post-menopausal are at the most risk of developing osteoporosis, and the presence of any one of these factors can add to your risk:

- Age
- Caucasian, Asian or Hispanic/Latino descent
- Thin or small build
- Previous fracture
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Early menopause (before age 45)
- Low sex hormones (estrogen in women/testosterone & estrogen in men)
- Smoking
- Inactive lifestyle
- Certain medications (including steroids and thyroid hormones)
- Alcohol abuse
- Diet (low calcium & vitamin D intake/excessive protein, sodium & caffeine intake)
- Certain diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, gastrointestinal disease & anorexia

Experts believe that the presence of any of these factors increases your risk of osteoporosis. If none of these factors apply, you may still be at risk. Only a bone mineral density test can provide the information your doctor needs to diagnose your condition.

There are a variety of effective ways to manage osteoporosis, and early detection using a bone densitometry test (one of which is known as a DEXA or bone densitometry) is the best way to protect yourself from the debilitating effects of this all too common condition.

What is a bone mineral density test and how is it done?

The bone mineral density test is a simple, painless, non-invasive procedure. You will be asked to lie perfectly still on a table while a movable arm passes over the area to be tested (typical test areas are hips or spine).

How long does the procedure take?

The test takes approximately 30 minutes, but allow yourself extra time to check in.

Will I be exposed to radiation, and if so, how much?

Yes, you will be exposed to a very small amount of radiation. For example, a bone density spine test delivers one-tenth the dosage of a chest X-ray.

Is the bone density test similar to a bone scan?

No. A bone scan is a procedure requiring an injection of radioactive material. A bone mineral density test is faster and requires no special preparatory drinks, medication, or injections.

What will the bone density test reveal?

The test will measure your bone mineral density (BMD), or bone mass, and compare that number with a reference population. This information will help your doctor determine if you need to take any specific steps to protect your bone health.

How do I prepare for the test?

Simply wear comfortable clothing without metal buttons, buckles or zippers. As with any medical procedure, be sure to inform your physician if you are or could be pregnant.