Bone Density Scan

Your doctor wants you to have a test called a bone density scan, also called bone densitometry. This test takes scans or computer pictures of your bones to check their density or thickness. It also tells the amount of minerals in your bones. Some people are at risk for soft bones that do not have enough minerals in them. This test helps your doctor plan treatment options that may include ways to prevent bone loss and how to replace needed minerals.

Who is at risk for poor bone density?

If you have poor bone density, you may have problems, such as osteoporosis or fragile bones. You may have a greater chance of having broken bones or fractures or back problems.

You may have a greater chance of having poor bone density in your body because of:

- Aging
- Family history of bone loss
- Long term use of certain medicines, such as steroids
- Certain treatments for prostate or breast cancer
- Spine fractures or bone loss
- Back pain with a possible fracture
- Loss of height
- Loss of certain hormones before 40 years of age
- Having a disease or condition that can cause bone loss, such as rheumatoid arthritis or anorexia nervosa
- Use of the Depo-Provera shots for more than 2 years

Scheduling your scan

- If you have had a bone density scan before, try to schedule your test at the same location. This will allow for a better comparison of your scan results.
- Most insurance companies will cover a bone density test 1 time every 24 months. Check with your insurance company if you have questions.
- Schedule your bone density scan at least 2 weeks after you have any other scans, x-rays, CT, or MRI tests with any contrast or barium.
Preparing for your scan

- Do not take calcium tablets or other medicines with added calcium for 24 hours before your test.
- Wear comfortable clothing that does not have metal or zippers, if possible.
- Bring a list of all of the medicines you take. Be sure to include prescription and over the counter medicines and any vitamin or herbal products that you take.
- If you are pregnant or think you might be, tell the radiologist or technologist before the scan is done.

How the test is done

- A technologist will go over your medical history with you. Your height and weight will be measured.
- The actual scan time is often less than 10 minutes.
- Scans are most often taken of the lower spine and both hips, but other sites may be done instead.
- The scans may be repeated if needed.
- There are no side effects from this test.
- A doctor who specializes in bone density will review your scan and give your doctor the test results.

The bone density scan uses much less radiation than a regular x-ray, such as a chest x-ray. This test is not the same as a bone scan. No injection is needed, and the machine does not make you feel closed in.

Your test is scheduled at:

- **Outpatient Care East**  
  543 Taylor Avenue, Columbus, OH 43203; Phone: 614-688-6333

- **Outpatient Care Gahanna**  
  920 N. Hamilton Road, Suite 700, Gahanna, OH 43220; Phone: 614-366-0829

- **Outpatient Care Lewis Center**  
  6515 Pullman Drive, Suite 1200, Lewis Center, OH 43035; Phone: 614-688-7044

- **Stefanie Spielman Comprehensive Breast Center**  
  1145 Olentangy River Road, Columbus, OH 43212; Phone: 614-688-7210

If you need to cancel or reschedule your test, please call **614-293-4333**.

Please call your test site directly if you have any questions or if your test is same day.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.

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