

Bone Density Screening

What Is Bone Density Screening?

Bone density screening is an initial evaluation of your bone mineralization (strength) or density. These tests are designed to identify women who are at risk for the development of osteoporosis before any symptoms appear. They are designed to be performed in the office at a reasonable cost so that all women can be tested for this potentially serious disease.

How Is Bone Density Screening Done?

There are currently several methods for bone density screening. Some of the tests use low-dose x-rays, and the most recent methods use ultrasound (sound waves). We use an ultrasound system called the SAHARA which measures bone density of the heel and takes less than a minute to perform.

How Accurate is Bone Density Screening?

Methods vary considerably in their accuracy, but ultrasound heel density has been found to be an excellent initial screening procedure which correlates well with more expensive bone density measurements of the hip. All abnormal bone density screening tests need to be confirmed by a DEXA scan to more accurately quantify the degree of bone loss in other areas of the body.

What Is Osteoporosis?

Your bones are composed of calcium and protein. Bone is constantly being formed and removed in your body. Until about age 30, women are forming new bone faster than it is being removed. After age 30, bone is broken down faster than it is made. Too much bone loss results in a disease called osteoporosis, where your bones become thinner and weaker than normal.

How Common Is Osteoporosis?

At least 25 million Americans are thought to have osteoporosis, and the disease is much more common in women than in men. One out of every three women over age 65 will have a spinal fracture, resulting in loss of height and possibly eventual development of a "dowager's hump" or curvature of the upper spine.

Are Some Women At Greater Risk Of Osteoporosis?

Women who have a low calcium diet, do not exercise regularly, or have a family history of osteoporosis are at high risk. Other risk factors include white or Asian race, slender build, cigarette smoking, excess alcohol intake, eating disorders, low estrogen level (menopause), hypothyroidism, and some medications. Unfortunately, the majority of women who develop osteoporosis have no special-risk factors and will only be diagnosed by a bone density screening test.

Is There Anything That Can Be Done About Osteoporosis?

In addition to adequate calcium intake and regular exercise, there are now several medical treatments which can slow the loss of bone density and help prevent osteoporosis. Identification of women at risk for osteoporosis is now a top priority in the preventative health care of women.

How Can I Arrange A Bone Density Screening?

The ultrasound heel density screening (Sahara) can be scheduled at our office and takes only a few minutes. We will need to use only your heel, but recommend avoiding nylons, tights, etc. to facilitate this exam. Please call the office to arrange the exam at any convenient time in your schedule.