

## A BONE DENSITY SCAN

– Why you need to have one.

- *NOF (National Osteoporosis Foundation) has estimated that more than 10 million Americans have osteoporosis and an additional 33.6 million have low bone density of the hip*
- *The test for bone loss is quick and painless.*
- *Prescription medication to rebuild bone is available.*

“It’s so easy and you’ll be glad you did it,” says Gracie, a 54-year-old grandmother of twin girls. “People never believe me when I say I’m a grandmother but looking good on the outside doesn’t mean a thing if you’re falling apart on the inside. When my doctor told me my bone density scan results showed I was in the early stages of osteoporosis I was shocked. ‘Not me! That’s an old lady disease!’ I said. But I soon learned that you don’t have to be old to have bone loss. The good news is that my bones improved considerably only one year after I started taking my medication. My daughter depends on me to baby-sit the children while she works. I need to be strong for those kids. I can’t afford to have fragile bones and I don’t want to look old and stooped over.”

According to NOF, Osteoporosis is responsible for nearly two million broken bones and \$19 billion in related costs every year. By 2025, experts predict that osteoporosis will be responsible for approximately three million fractures and \$25.3 billion in costs. Countless others, such as Gracie, are at risk for developing the disease. Poor dietary habits (little calcium consumption or lactose intolerance), smoking and lack of exercise are partly to blame for the increase in persons diagnosed with osteoporosis in the past century but genetics and physical health history cannot be ignored.

Dowager’s hump is a common bodily characteristic of the disease but not the only consequence. Shortness of breath, neck pain, abdominal discomfort and unrelenting back pain rob the patient of his/her quality of life. Complications from hip fracture, three times more common in women

than men, can result in death. Of those persons who recover from hip fracture a full 50% will lose the ability to walk independently (without use of a cane or walker).

Prevention by testing for bone loss is so easy. When you arrive for your bone mineral density scans the technologist will measure your height and weight (if not measured prior to your appointment). Your ethnicity and birth date will also be obtained as these numbers are typed into the computer and used by the analysis program to accurately predict your risk of fracture.

You will then be asked to lie on a table much like an exam table. It is padded and comfortable and a pillow will be placed under your head. To acquire a measurement of the spine, the technologist will place a cushion beneath your knees. This is done to bring the spine closer to the tabletop. An overhead, narrow X-ray tube will then be moved into position and scanning, at the level of your waist, will begin. After measuring the spine the X-ray tube will return to its resting place at the head of the table and the cushion will be removed from beneath your knees. To measure your hips, the technologist will ask that you lower your legs and straighten them out on the table. A positioning device will be placed between your feet and you will be asked to rotate your legs inward from the hip as your feet are secured. The X-ray tube will be moved into position at the level of your hips and scanning will begin. The entire process is very simple and should not take more than 15-20 minutes.

When your scans are finished, the technologist will briefly go over the results with you but your final report (risk for fracture, need for medication, etc.) will come from your doctor. You will have access to this report on the facility portal. If you do not know how to log in to see your results, let someone at the front desk know. They will help you learn to use your patient pin number to check your test results.

***On the day of your appointment***, please bring to the office any supplements that may contain calcium or vitamin D (or you may bring a list that contains the amounts of each. These ingredients and their amounts can be found on the back labels of your multi-vitamins and calcium/Vitamin D supplement combinations. If you obtain your calcium from dairy sources only, please make a list of the dairy item and the amount you consume each day. This will help to save time and is a necessary part of your patient

profile. *In addition*, please wear clothing that does not contain zippers, snaps, or metal decoration. Pull on, jogging-type, pants are best.

To anyone who may have doubt as to whether they need a scan, Gracie says, “It’s one of those things you’ve got to do to protect your future. If you’re one of the lucky people with genetically good bones imagine how knowing that will make you feel? If, like me, you already have bone loss the test will bring it to light. Then, with the help of your physician, you can rebuild bone before damage has been done. After all, what good is a youthful face if it’s hovering above an old body?”

RISK FACTORS:

Caucasian (White) or Asian

Weight less than 127 pounds

Loss of height

Family members who have broken a hip

Smoking

Excessive alcohol consumption

Early cessation of menses (natural or through surgery)

Little or no calcium intake

Lack of exercise

\*\*\*Note: For an idea of the best sources of foods containing calcium visit the National Osteoporosis Foundation website: [NOF.org](http://NOF.org)  
There you will find a wealth of information about how to treat and prevent osteoporosis.

*“Love your bones.  
They’re yours for a lifetime!”*  
Terri Fabula CBDT