



Bone Densitometry (DEXA)

Patient Information



What is a Bone Densitometry (DEXA):

Bone Densitometry measures the density (hardness) of your bones. Also called a dual energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) scan, the results of your exam are compared to others whose age, sex and ethnic background are like yours.

Why is a DEXA Done:

A DEXA scan is used to check for osteoporosis (a bone disease). Osteoporosis is a loss of bone density and strength, which means bones have a higher chance of breaking. This can happen when the body does not make enough new bone, or when too much calcium in the bone is taken back by your body to be used.

What You Can Expect During the Exam:

The DEXA is a low-dose x-ray that checks for signs of bone loss and thinning. The best place to test is the spine (backbone) or hip. When you are ready for the exam, you will lie on your back on the exam table. An “arm” above you will move over the part of your body being tested and take readings of your bone density.

Report:

Results from your exam will not be ready right away. A radiologist will study your images and report back to your health care provider in 24 to 48 hours, Monday through Friday. Your health care provider will give you the results.



Osteoporosis:

The most common risk factor for osteoporosis is lower levels of the hormones estrogen (in women) and testosterone (in men). Having less of these hormones may cause your body to use more of the calcium in your bones than normal. The risk of osteoporosis in women increases after menopause (no longer having periods) because it causes the largest drop of estrogen. By the age of 65, both men and women tend to lose bone at the same rate.

As people age, their risk factors for osteoporosis increase. Other risk factors include:

- Alcohol abuse
- Caucasian/Asian descent
- Early menopause (last period before age 45)
- Eating disorders
- Family members having osteoporosis
- History of bone fractures (cracks in the bone or the bone breaking)
- Not enough calcium
- Not exercising
- Smoking
- Some medicines (including steroids and thyroid hormones)
- Surgical menopause (removal of uterus and/or ovaries)
- Thin or small build

Directions:

Waverly Health Center is at 312 Ninth Street, SW in Waverly. Please go through the green entrance and check in at the registration desk. When you have finished your check in, you will be taken to the radiology waiting area.

What You Can Do to Prevent Osteoporosis:

- **Diet-** Make sure to have enough Vitamin D, protein and calcium each day.
- Below are the amounts of calcium different women should have each day.
 - 1000 mg: women menstruating (have normal periods) and not pregnant
 - 1200 mg: pregnant women
 - 1500 mg: postmenopausal women (no longer have period) or nursing mothers
- **Exercise**
- **Medicines-** Many kinds of medicines may be used to slow osteoporosis.
- **Prevent Falls-** Stay away from places that may cause you to fall.
- **Stop Unhealthy Habits-** Quit smoking, and if you drink alcohol or caffeinated drinks (like pop and coffee), have only small amounts.