

Bone Density Test

What is a bone density test?

A bone density test is a safe and painless X-ray that can measure the amount of mineral in your bone. The x-ray takes pictures of your hips and lower back or spine.

Other names for this test include:

- Bone Mineral Testing or BMD
- Dual X-ray Absorptiometry, or DXA.

Why is this test done?

This test can help tell you if you have osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is when bones become thinner and weaker causing them to break more easily.

How is the test done?



You will need to lie on your back on a comfortable padded table. A pillow support is placed under both legs for the spine testing. Another support is placed between your feet to hold them in place for hip testing.

Please call us if you have concerns about getting onto the table for the test. Our staff can help you, and can get a lift if needed.

The machine takes the pictures and is connected to a computer. The computer converts the pictures of the bone into bone density measurements.

A technologist is with you during the test and will explain to you what is going on.

Is the test safe?

The test is very safe. It involves only a small amount of radiation, less than one-tenth the amount of a chest x-ray.

Tell your doctor or the person giving you the test if you are pregnant, or if you may be pregnant before having the test.

Will I need to have a needle?

No. You will not need to have any needles. The test is painless.

How long does the test take?

The entire test takes about 10 to 15 minutes.

How do I prepare for the test?

Sweat suits or loose clothing without zippers, belts, snaps or metal trim or pins are ideal. Do not wear an underwire bra.

Eat and drink normally on the day of the test. Do not take your calcium pill the day of the test.

How will I get the test results?

The test results will be mailed to the doctor who asked for the test. Please contact the doctor who sent you for the test; he or she will explain the results to you.

How often do I need to have this test?

Talk with your doctor about this. Most people have a test every 1 to 5 years.

Where do I go for my test?

Bone density testing is done in two locations at Hamilton Health Sciences.

Juravinski Hospital: Juravinski Hospital : 711 Concession Street in Hamilton The Bone Density Unit is in the X-ray area on Level 1.

For information call: 905-521-2100, ext. 77484.

McMaster University Medical Centre: McMaster is located at 1200 Main Street West in Hamilton. The Bone Density Unit is located in the Nuclear Medicine Department on the first floor in the blue area.

For information call: 905-521-2100, ext. 75679.

Bone density tests should normally be completed at one site. If you have a bone density test done at McMaster, for example, any further tests should be done there also.

