

Bone Mineral Density (BMD) Test

Where: _____

When: _____

Time: _____

What is a bone mineral density test?

This test uses a low-dose x-ray of the hip, spine, or forearm to measure your bone density. The lower the density of a bone; the higher the risk that it will break. An extra spine image may be done to look for spine fractures. A bone density scan is painless. It takes about 40 minutes. The radiation dose is very small.

Why have a bone density test?

- Detect osteoporosis (a disease in which bones become fragile and more likely to break).
- Detect bone loss from taking certain medicines.
- Measure changes in bone density over time.
- Help decide on treatment options for low bone density.
- See how well osteoporosis treatment is working.
- Help plan bone surgery.

How to Prepare for the Test

- Tell your doctor if you may be pregnant.
- It is okay to eat and drink before the test.
- **Do not take calcium pills or chewable tablets within 12 hours before the test. This includes TUMS® or other antacids.**
- Do not wear clothes with metal such as buckles, rivets, buttons, zippers or underwire bras.

During the Test

You will lie on an exam table for the spine and hip images. You may need to lie on your side for a different view of your spine or sit in a chair for a forearm test. You will be asked to remain still during the test. You will be in an open space. A bone density tech will be with you during the test.

In some cases, the tech will need to talk to the doctor who is reading the scan by phone. A phone call to the doctor is not a cause for alarm, just a need for more information.

Test Results

Your bone density is compared to standards, or norms, known as “age matched” and “young normal.” The age-matched reading compares your bone density to what is normal for someone of your age, sex, and size. The young normal reading compares your results to the best peak bone mass of a healthy young adult. The doctor that ordered this test will give you the results.

Where should I go for this test?

Your test could be at any of the four Madison UW Health locations listed. Your doctor will tell you where to go for your test.

- West Clinic on Junction Rd.
- 1 South Park St. Clinic on Park St.
- UW Hospital on Highland Ave.
- East Clinic on East Terrace Dr.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©8/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5646.