



Bone Density Testing

Bone density is the amount of bone tissue in a certain volume of bone. It can be measured using a special x-ray called a quantitative computed tomogram. Bone density testing is used to assess the strength of your bones and the possibility of fracture in those who are at risk for osteoporosis. Bone density testing is also referred to as bone densitometry, bone mineral density scan (BMD), or dual energy x-ray absorption (DEXA) scan. It is performed with devices that measure bone density in the hip, spine, wrist, heel, or finger. The scan requires only about one tenth of the radiation of a regular x-ray. It is a simple, non-invasive procedure that takes just a few short minutes.

In premenopausal women, estrogen produced in the body maintains bone density. Following the onset of menopause, bone loss increases each year and can result in total loss of 25% – 30 % of bone density in the first five to ten years after menopause. In general, this testing is recommended for women 65 + years of age, along with younger postmenopausal women, who have risk factors for osteoporosis. Women who have been on hormone replacement therapy for prolonged periods of time should also have regular bone density tests.

Your bone density measurement will be compared to the average peak bone density of young adults of the same sex and race. Osteoporosis is defined as having a bone density of more than 25% below this average. A bone density between 10% – 25% below average levels is termed osteopenia and reflects a milder degree of bone loss than osteoporosis. Bone density testing can detect osteoporosis at its earliest stages, so treatment can begin sooner. If you are already being tested for osteoporosis, bone density testing will assist your health care provider in monitoring your response to the treatment.

Bone density testing is performed while you are lying still on a cushioned table. A scanner will pass over your body, taking painless x-rays of your lower spine and hip. You will not need to remove your clothes, but be sure **not** to wear clothing with metal snaps, zippers, or buttons.

The results of your test are usually reported as a “T score” and “Z score.” The T score compares your bone density to that of healthy young women. The Z score compares your bone density to that of other people of your age and gender. In either score, a negative number means that you have thinner bones than the standard. The higher the negative the number, the thinner your bones.

Gwinnett Medical Center offers bone density testing at our Lawrenceville, Duluth, and Hamilton Mill facilities. To schedule your bone density exam, you must first obtain an order from your physician, then either you or someone from your physician’s office may call **Imaging Scheduling at 678.312.3444** to schedule your exam.

Bone Density Testing is available at these Gwinnett Medical Center facilities:

Marion Allison Webb Center for Screening Mammography

500 Medical Center Blvd.
Suite 190
Lawrenceville, GA 30045

Phone: 678.312.4070
Fax: 678.312.4084

Screening Mammography Center at GMC – Duluth

3855 Pleasant Hill Rd
Suite 340
Duluth, GA 30096

Phone: 678.312.7841
Fax: 770.623.8793

GMC Imaging Center - Hamilton Mill

2078 Teron Trace
Suite 200
Dacula, GA 30019

Phone: 678.312.8600
Fax: 678.312.3651