Bone Mineral Density

A bone mineral density exam can detect early loss of bone minerals, such as calcium. This mineral loss may lead to osteoporosis. The exam is done in the Nuclear Medicine department and lasts about 30 minutes. The amount of radiation used in this test is small and well within limits that are not considered harmful.

Please tell your doctor or the X-ray staff if you may be pregnant or if you have had a problem with this exam in the past.

Before the Test

To obtain accurate test results, it is important that you do not undergo any of the following procedures within 30 days of your bone mineral density exam:

- Exams using barium or a radioisotope injection.
- CT scans with injection of contrast material.
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

The Test

There is no special preparation for this test.

On the day of your test, wear loose-fitting clothes without zippers or snaps.

Please come to the 8th Floor Reception Desk in the Galter Pavilion, 201 E. Huron St., at your scheduled appointment time. Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 E. Huron, across from the Feinberg and Galter Pavilions. For discounted rates, please bring your parking ticket with you. Tickets can be validated at the Customer Services Desks on the 1st and 2nd floor of the Feinberg and Galter Pavilions, and the 1st floor of Prentice (including the Prentice 24-hour desk near the Superior St. entrance).

Be sure to bring:

- Your doctor's written order for the test.
- Insurance card.
- Medicare card (for Medicare patients).
- List of allergies & current medicines.

During the Test

When you arrive in the Nuclear Medicine department, a technologist (tech) will ask you questions about your medical history. If you think you might be pregnant, please tell the tech before the test is done.

During the exam, you will lie on a table while 2 scans are done. One scan is of your spine and the other is of your hip. The scans, similar to an X-ray, take about 15 minutes. The tech checks the scan images before you leave the department.

After the Test

You may resume your normal activities and diet after the test. The test results are sent to your doctor within 3 to 5 working days of the exam.

If you have any questions about this test, please call the Nuclear Medicine department at 312-926-2514, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar a el departamento de representantes para pacientes al 312-926-3112.

Northwestern Memorial is an equal opportunity employer that welcomes, respects and serves with dignity all people and does not discriminate, including in hiring, or employment, or admission, or access to, or treatment in its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, religion, disability, handicap, age, Vietnam or other veteran status, sexual orientation or any other status protected by relevant law. To arrange for TDD/TTY, auxiliary aids and foreign language interpretation services, call the Patient Representative department at 312-926-3112, TDD number 312-926-6363. Issues related to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 should be directed to the director of Employee Relations or designee at 312-926-7297.

Developed by: Department of Nuclear Medicine

© September 2007 Northwestern Memorial Hospital
For more information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit www.nmh.org.
1100-07
900730 (09/07)