

Osteoporosis – Risks and Prevention

Until the 1990's, osteoporosis was considered by the majority of the medical profession to be a natural, inevitable part of aging. There were few breakthroughs relative to its detection or prevention until 1995 when the FDA-approved DEXA device became available. DEXA devices use very low dose radiation to accurately measure bone density. The 1990's also saw the development of prescription medications that assist in the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is a disease that reduces the strength of your bones, causing them to become brittle and prone to fractures. Approximately half of all women over the age of 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime, mostly affecting their hips, spines or wrists. Osteoporosis can also result in a decrease in height due to the compression of the vertebrae; this compression causes a stooped posture known as “dowager’s hump” or kyphosis.

Eighty percent of those affected by osteoporosis are women. Its cause is due, in part, to a slow drop in estrogen, a condition that can begin in women as early as age 30. With the onset of menopause, when the estrogen loss accelerates, bone loss can speed up to a rate of one to three percent a year. By age 70, a woman’s bone mass may be one-half of what it was at age 30.

There are many ways to reduce or eliminate your risk of becoming victim of this disease that can be painful and debilitating. The following steps will prove helpful in your quest for healthy bones: a balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D; weight-bearing exercise; a healthy lifestyle with no smoking and limited alcohol intake; bone density testing, and medication, when appropriate. With early detection and preventative measures, we can help to ensure that your years ahead will be enjoyable and well-spent, not immobilized or in pain.

Following is some information on DEXA Bone Density Testing.

DEXA Bone Density Testing

Bedford Commons OB-GYN offers DEXA (Dual-Energy X-ray Absorptiometry) scanning which is a technology used to measure bone density. This non-invasive, painless radiologic test helps individuals identify individuals who are at risk for osteoporosis. Osteoporosis, a disease in which bones become thin, weak, and more likely to fracture, is a major health problem among post-menopausal women in the United States.

DEXA scan results help women to better understand her own personal risk of bone fracture, and help her determine whether to start medications and/or make lifestyle changes that may help to prevent or decrease the risk of osteoporosis. If osteoporosis is already present, DEXA results help the patient and her provider determine the course of treatment, and possibly reverse the process of bone loss. Most insurance companies cover DEXA scans, and the test is usually performed once every two to three years.

Our on-site DEXA testing is performed by qualified members of our staff, and each patient's results are interpreted by one of our certified providers, who have pursued advance study in DEXA testing and osteoporosis. They have obtained certification from the International Society of Clinical Densitometry.

The provider carefully reviews the DEXA scan results, along with the patient's personal and family history and health habits in order to make the most appropriate recommendation for the prevention or treatment of osteoporosis.