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BONE MINERAL DENSITOMETRY FACT SHEET

Niagara Health is pleased to provide you with general information about your upcoming exam.

WHAT IS A BONE MINERAL DENSITOMETRY EXAM?

A bone mineral densitometry study or BMD, (also called DPX or DEXA), is used to detect a disease called osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a decrease of the mineral in your bones that can lead to weak bones and fractures.

The bone mineral densitometer uses low dose x-rays to produce images of the spine and hip. The spine and hip are measured because osteoporotic fractures occur most often in these areas.

A computer determines how much bone mineral is present.

WHAT IS THE RADIATION EXPOSURE?

Approximately one-tenth that of a chest x-ray.

CAN I EAT OR DRINK BEFORE MY EXAM?

Yes, however, do not take calcium supplements for two hours prior to your exam.

WHAT IF I COULD BE PREGNANT?

Please tell the Medical Radiation Technologist if it is possible that you are pregnant. The test will likely be delayed.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING TO MY APPOINTMENT?

Please bring your Ontario Health Card.

Please note that the Niagara Health System is a scent-free environment.

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR TO MY EXAMINATION?

Please wear comfortable clothing that does not have zippers or other metal fasteners. Belt buckles, metal or thick plastic buttons and metal jewellery will need to be removed from the spine and hip area prior to your bone densitometry exam.

HOW DOES THE PROCEDURE WORK?

Before the exam starts, the Medical Radiation Technologist will ask you to complete a questionnaire. Your exact age, weight and height must be recorded to ensure correct results. You will lie on your back on a padded table and your spine and hip will be positioned for the images.

IS THE EXAMINATION PAINFUL?

No. The procedure does not cause pain for most people. Patients who are already experiencing back or hip pain may be uncomfortable during the exam.

HOW LONG WILL MY EXAMINATION LAST?

The exam lasts approximately 30 minutes.

HOW WILL I RECEIVE MY BONE DENSITOMETRY RESULTS?

The pictures are reported by specially trained doctors. The results are sent to your doctor.