



The only sure way to determine bone density and fracture risk for osteoporosis is to have a bone mass measurement (also called bone mineral density or BMD test). Your doctor can help you determine whether you should have a BMD test.

There are several ways to measure bone mineral density; all are painless, noninvasive and safe. The tests measure bone density in your spine, hip and/or wrist, the most common sites of fractures due to osteoporosis. Recently, bone density tests have been approved by the FDA that measure bone density in the middle finger and the heel or shinbone. Your bone density is compared to two standards, or norms, known as “age matched” and “young normal.”

The age-matched reading compares your bone density to what is expected in someone of your age, sex and size. The young normal reading compares your density to the optimal peak bone density of a healthy young adult of the same sex.

The information from a bone density test enables your doctor to identify where you stand within ranges of normal and to determine whether you are at risk for fracture. In general, the lower your bone density, the higher your risk for fracture. Test results will help you and your doctor decide the best course of action for your bone health.