

Your Bone Strength. Any Idea?

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Millions upon millions of Americans have osteoporosis. I heard a good description of osteoporosis one time that goes like this.

Think of your bone structure (skeleton) like a brick wall. If bricks could be taken out randomly, slowly and continually - what eventually happens to the wall?

Not hard to get the picture is it? That's what osteoporosis does to you.

Also alarming (for those who say it won't happen to them) is the fact that one out of every two women over fifty will at some time have an osteoporotic fracture. One out of every four men over fifty will have an osteoporotic related fracture. I didn't make that up. The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Disease published it.

There is some good news however? You can undergo a test called a DEXA scan, which is excellent at diagnosing osteoporosis. Osteoporosis has to be correctly diagnosed before there can be any effective treatment. DEXA is the gold standard for diagnosing osteoporosis.

How does it work?

It couldn't be easier. Listen to this. It is painless. No injections are involved. It is entirely non-invasive. There is minimal radiation exposure (about 1/10 the x-ray exposure of a chest x-ray). You don't need to get undressed. You lie on a padded table while the technician administers the test and scans one or more areas of the body. No sedation, or special diet or fasting needs to happen. It only takes a few minutes to do the scan. It sounds too good to be true doesn't it?

What's the catch?

The not so good news. Though many medical plans will cover the cost of the study, about three hundred dollars - Medicare has been reducing what it pays for the procedure to hospitals and doctor's offices. As a result fewer offices are performing the procedure.

How is DEXA scan evaluated?

DEXA obtains a "T-score" for your bones. It is a number. It compares your bone mineral density to that of healthy persons 30 years old of the same race and sex.

T-score of -1 to -2.5 indicates mild bone loss.

T-score of -2.5 or lower indicates major bone loss.

It is somewhat more complicated than this of course, but you get the picture.

There are several other important points to be made that I think should wait till next week when we will have more time. This seems like a good place to stop. Please try to come back next week for some really interesting information.

All Orthopaedic Surgery problems can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at the Lakeview Community Wellness Center in Lakeview or at the office in Alma at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan.

Please call 989-463-6092 for information or to schedule an appointment.

Future Lakeview Community Wellness Center Clinic dates are Friday, August 21 and Friday, September 4, 2009.

Please log on to the office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com for much more information about osteoporosis and all bone and musculoskeletal matters.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush