

Researchers stress weight-bearing exercise for bone strength

March 17 2014, by Dave Taylor



Jenifer Fortney of Hindsboro, Ill., a graduate student in physician assistant studies at Indiana State University, prepares to conduct a bone-density screening March 8, 2014, at Honey Creek Mall in Terre Haute. Credit: ISU/Rachel Keyes

When Denise Allee went shopping at Terre Haute's Honey Creek Mall on a recent Saturday, she left with some piece of mind.

Future [health care providers](#) from Indiana State University had set up a booth inside the mall's main entrance, offering free bone-density scans

as part of a research project.

"We have a few bone problems that go in the family, so I just thought I would go ahead and have it checked out," said Allee, 59, of Bloomington. "I was surprised how good I did."

Surprised and relieved - "very relieved," she said, following the simple two-minute test and after answering a few questions about her weight and level of physical [activity](#) at age 27.

"We're looking at women between the ages of 45 and 65 and at their activity level at 27, which is when it is estimated [bone mineral density](#) is at its peak," explained Lindsey Sims, a master's degree student in physician assistant studies. "We're doing [bone scans](#) to see if their activity levels have increased their bone density or if they were sedentary and have decreased their [bone](#) density."

Sims and two of her fellow students are testing a theory that being overweight as a young adult can result in decreased risk for osteoporosis later in life.

"We're hypothesizing that if you're overweight, then you're putting weight-bearing activity on yourself, on your body and on your bones, so that would have an equivalent effect of working out at the gym," she said.

So far, the students in Indiana State's College of Nursing, Health, and Human Services have found most women who have the [bone density](#) test done are at low risk for osteoporosis.

Still, said Sims, the research could help today's young women recognize the importance of weight-bearing activities and how they could benefit them later in life.

But researchers stress it is healthier overall if those weight-bearing activities come from working out in the gym, rather than carrying around a few extra pounds.

Sims said her involvement in the study is helping her become an even stronger proponent of exercise when she treats future patients.

"I can push them toward a more active lifestyle, so that there is a significant impact on their later life," she said. "It could change my perspective and make me more proactive."

Provided by Indiana State University

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