

Repeat bone density tests might not be needed, study finds

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(HealthDay)—Bone density tests are often touted as a way to predict the

risk of fracture in postmenopausal women, but a new study casts doubt on the value of repeating this commonly used test.

The research was led by Dr. Carolyn Crandall, of the division of general internal medicine and health services research at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine. Her team collected data on more than 7,000 [postmenopausal women](#) aged 50 to 79 years.

The participants underwent bone mineral density measurements at the start of the study and again three years later. Their health was tracked for an average of 12 years, and they informed the researchers if they'd had any major [fractures](#).

About 2% did experience a [hip fracture](#), while nearly 10% had some form of osteoporotic fracture, the investigators found.

However, having a second bone scan "was not associated with improved discrimination between women who did and did not experience subsequent hip fracture or major osteoporotic fracture," according to the report published online July 27 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

In other words, a second bone scan didn't help doctors better predict which women might suffer a fracture of their hip, spine, forearm or shoulder.

In fact, the researchers found that the results of a woman's *first* bone scan were much more predictive of her risk of fracture than any subsequent [test](#), regardless of the woman's race, ethnicity and age.

Given these findings, the study authors believe that repeat bone density tests should not be part of a routine exam in postmenopausal women.

Dr. Spyros Mezitis is an endocrinologist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New

York City. Reading over the new findings, he noted that "bone mineral density scans are costly to the [health care system](#)" and there are less expensive options, such as blood or urine tests, to monitor bone health.

The new study might therefore "empower physicians to increasingly use annual blood/urine [bone](#) turnover markers to decide on treatment of worsening osteopenia or osteoporosis," Mezitis said.

More information: For more on bone mineral density tests, head to the [U.S. National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases](#).

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