

## What is a bone density test?

A bone density test, also known as bone mass measurement or bone mineral density test, measures the strength and density of bones as patients approach menopause and, when the test is repeated sometime later, can help determine how quickly you are losing bone mass and density. These tests are painless, noninvasive, and safe. They compare bone density with standards for what is expected based on age, gender, and size, and to the optimal peak bone density of a healthy young adult of the same gender. Bone density testing can help to:

- Detect low bone density before a fracture occurs.
- Confirm a diagnosis of osteoporosis if patients already have a fracture.
- Predict the chances of fracturing in the future.
- Determine a patient's rate of bone loss and/or monitor the effects of treatment if the test is conducted at intervals of a year or more.



## Current situation

**A bone density test is not currently available in QVMC's service area.** 13,000 residents depend on QVMC to be there when they need medical services. Currently, patients must travel to Wenatchee or Moses Lake to receive this preventative service.

## Why is this important to the community?



- Limited locations and increased travel times for this important service has resulted in many patients going untested.
- A growth in population within the community based on the new data centers being built by Microsoft, Yahoo and Intuit.
- A growing/aging population with resort and retirement communities on the rise.
- Increased wait times for scans, based on the capacity and backlog in other locations.
- The earlier you have your bone

density tested, the sooner you can assess your risk of fracture due to osteoporosis and begin to preserve your bone strength.

## ***Who should be tested?***

Bone densitometers are available on a limited basis across North Central Washington. Like any other diagnostic test, patients must be referred by a physician. Individuals who, in consultation with their physicians, discover that they are at high risk of developing osteoporosis have this test in order to plan a proper healthcare strategy.

Specifically, there are several situations where a bone density test is recommended:

- You are 65 or older
- You and your physician have done a risk factor assessment and have determined that you are a high-risk individual
- You have lost four or more cm in height overall or two or more cm in one year. You have kyphosis (excessive backward curvature of the spine resulting in either a hump or a more gradually rounded back).
- You are taking glucocorticoid medication, and want to determine if you are losing bone mass and whether treatment for osteoporosis is required.
- You have recently had a fracture in which osteoporosis is suspected and you want to make decisions about further diagnosis and treatment options.
- You already have osteoporosis and you and your physician are monitoring the effectiveness of the treatment.

## **Capacity and Demand**

The expected demand for this service is projected to be 1,300 scans per year. A new bone density scanner would provide a needed service locally, thus reducing patient travel times, greatly alleviating wait times for patients, and providing a service to all local providers they desperately need and have requested for years.



## **Budget/Cost**

The cost for the acquisition, implementation and maintenance of a new bone densitometry scanner is currently **\$80,000**.