What is a bone survey?

A bone survey, also called a skeletal survey, is a series of X-rays taken to look at the major bones of the body. A bone survey takes X-rays of the:

- Skull.
- Ribs.
- Spine.
- Pelvis.
- Long bones (humerus and femur, the largest bones in the arm and leg).
- Any other bones that need to be looked at.

Past bone injuries can be seen on a bone survey. Bone surveys are often used in patients with multiple myeloma for both diagnosis and to see how far the disease has progressed. Multiple myeloma causes bone to break down and there can be lesions that look like holes in the bones on x-rays.

How do I prepare for a bone survey?

You do not need to do anything to prepare for a bone survey.

How is this test performed?

You will lie still for a few minutes while the x-rays are being taken. During the exam, the radiology technician must leave the room to avoid radiation exposure. They will be nearby in an area where they can see and hear you. The amount of radiation a patient gets is small, but if you are pregnant you should let your provider know.

How do you receive the results of your bone survey?

The results of a bone survey can be hard to interpret and the provider looking at the results should know the patient's medical history.

The radiologist writes a report for the provider who ordered the bone survey. The report provides information about the patient, the reason for the test, if contrast was given and what was found. The report will detail both normal and abnormal findings. Your provider will be able to discuss your results with you.