

# Heart Drug Reduces Bone Breaks

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**From:** Bill (*xxx\_at\_yy.zz*)

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I view this as very preliminary. I would like to have seen some bone mass density tests. How do we know the people given both drugs were not less active and thus less prone to fractures? Perhaps the full article clarifies.

Bill

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Heart Drug Reduces Bone Breaks

By Megan Rauscher

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) — Treatment with a beta-blocker drug — usually for high blood pressure or heart failure — significantly reduces the risk of bone fractures, according to findings from a large population-based study. The effect was seen whether or not the beta-blocker was taken with a diuretic "water pill."

Many elderly people with high blood pressure and who are prone to fractures because of brittle bones could derive a double benefit from these medications, researchers conclude in this week's issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association (news – web sites).

There are many beta-blockers sold, including Inderal, Tenormin, and Toprol.

"Animal studies suggest that the beta-blocker propranolol (Inderal) increases bone formation," Dr. Raymond G. Schlienger from the University of Basel in Switzerland told Reuters Health. However, "data in humans are limited."

To investigate, his group analyzed data from the UK General Practice Research Database on 30,601 patients with a bone fracture and 120,819 matched fracture-free patients. The men and women in the study were between 30 and 79 years of ages.

People who had filled three or more prescription for a beta-blocker were 23 percent less likely to have a fracture than people not taking beta-blockers. For diuretic prescriptions, the risk was reduced by 20 percent, and with both drugs it was lowered to 28 percent.

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Of note, the researchers took into account smoking, body weight, and numerous other drugs that are known to alter fracture risk.

Schlienger's team calls for additional studies to confirm these "potentially important findings."

In the meantime, it seems that elderly patients with high blood pressure "may potentially profit from positive effects of the relatively inexpensive beta-blockers and thiazide diuretics on fracture risk," they conclude.

SOURCE: Journal of the American Medical Association, September 15, 2004.