



**Q** I was told by my doctor that my bone-density test came back out of range. What does this mean for my future health? How often should I be doing bone-density tests? Is there anything I could have done to prevent this?

*Responding is Kevin Jovanovic, MD, FACOG, AACS, Associate Professor of OB/GYN at Lenox Hill Hospital. He trained in OB/GYN at Yale University School of Medicine and attended Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He is a Fellow of the American College of OB/GYN, Associate Fellow of the College of Surgeons, and Associate of the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery. In his practice at Manhattan Laser Center for Vein Treatment, he provides a full array of women's medical and cosmetic services.*

**A** Osteoporosis means "porous bone." It is a condition in which the strength of the bones has decreased for different reasons. Bone Mineral Density (BMD) is the medical term used to quantify the amount of bone, usually reported as T-score, a measure of standard deviations from the mean. A negative T-score is having less bone than average, and positive T-score is more bone than average. We are concerned about osteoporosis because it foreshadows the risk of breaking bones.

We have no way to rebuild bone. All the medicines on the market today are good at slowing bone loss, or may build bone a little compared to patients of similar age. In lacking a way to rebuild bone, the focus has shifted to testing and treating patients earlier so that we can stop this bone loss before it becomes medically relevant. This has led to "over treating" many patients and has resulted in discovering some severe side effects of the medicines used.

The World Health Organization has just released the October 2008 FRAX risk-assessment tool, which enables clinicians to calculate a patient's ten-year risk of hip fracture. It is online at the FRAX WHO Fracture Risk Assessment Tool website. It uses the information from the Bone Density scan along with age, weight, height, fracture history, smoking status, medications, and alcohol use to determine the fracture risk.

The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends the following:

- Check for other causes of osteoporosis (medication, hormones, etc.)
- Bone-density testing for all women over 65 as well as for younger women with risk factors or a history of a fracture
- Start treatment in women who have had a hip or vertebral fracture
- Start treatment in women with a DXA-based T-score (score on the bone density) of less than or equal to -2.5 (osteoporosis) at the hip or spine.
- Start treatment in women with T-score from -1.0 to -2.5 and a ten-year FRAX risk of more than 3 percent
- Start treatment in patients with a ten-year FRAX of less than 20 percent
- Bone densities should be done every two years

Overall treatment recommendations for all patients include calcium (1,200 mg/day) and vitamin D (800 to 1,000 IU/day) intake. Lifestyle modifications should include regular weight-bearing exercise and decreasing smoking and alcohol intake. We have a good test with Bone Density DXA scans to see who may be at risk for a fracture. We also have better tools to decide who should be on treatment to prevent fractures without being exposed to unnecessary side effects.

*Readers are invited to send their medical questions to [familyfirst@mishpacha.com](mailto:familyfirst@mishpacha.com).*

## healthtip

Researchers at Chicago's Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation asked 1,436 obese and overweight people to sprinkle everything they ate with calorie-free crystals designed to enhance the smell and taste of food. After six months, participants lost thirty pounds on average without changing other diet or exercise habits. Since ninety percent of what we perceive as taste is actually smell, the researchers speculate that participants found the foods tastier and more satisfying — hence, they ate less. Bottom line? Focus on improving the taste of your food, and you might actually eat less of it, as counter-intuitive as that may sound.



## didyouknow?

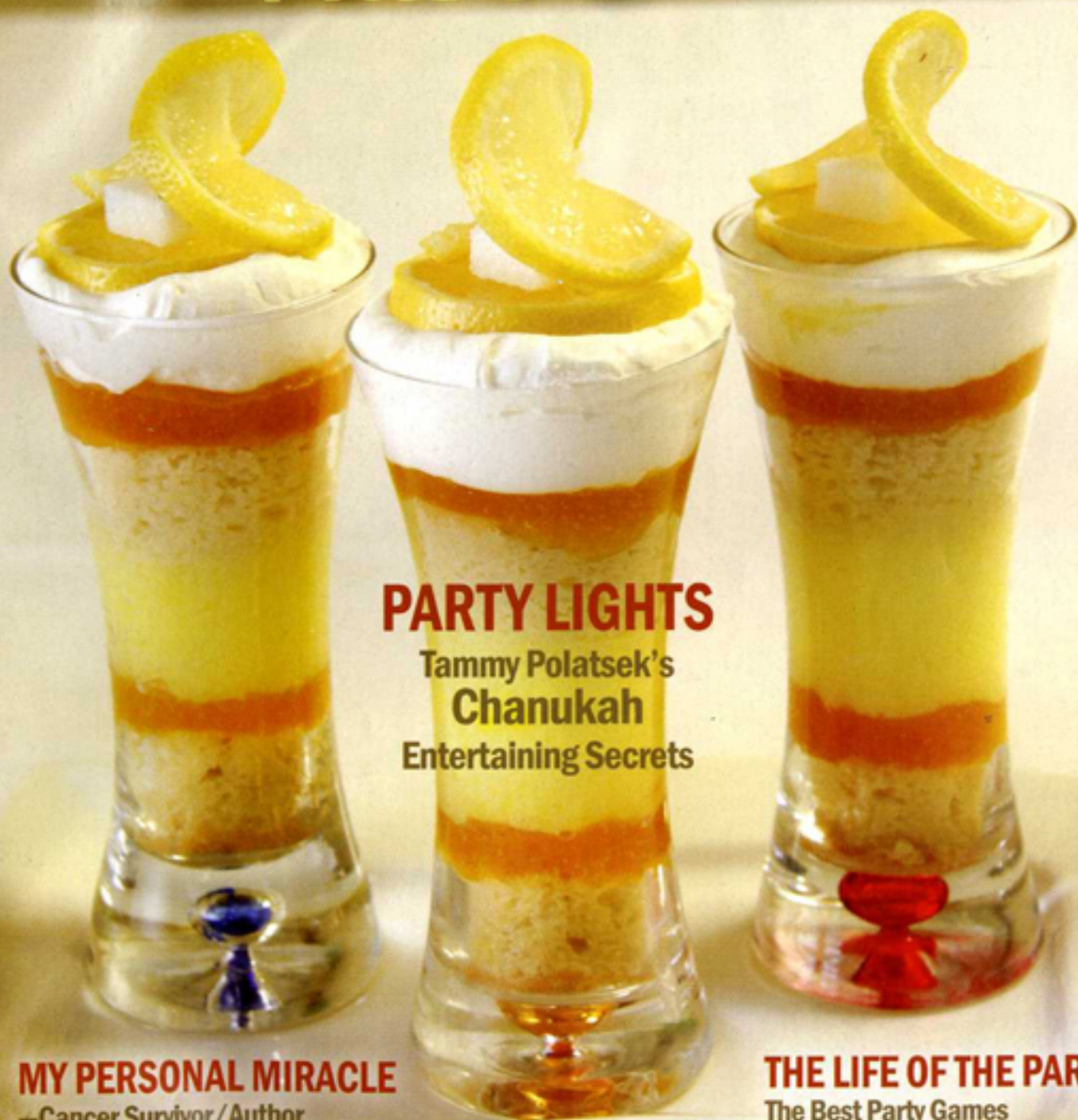
People quickly develop a tolerance to antihistamines, so the more often you use them, the less helpful they will be.



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