

Osteoporosis Screening

Osteoporosis is a common condition in which the bones lose mineral content and density. It is more common as people age. The bones become fragile and are more likely to break. These fractures occur typically in the hip, spine and wrist.

Why screen for osteoporosis?

Both men and women can have osteoporosis without any symptoms. The fractures that may result cause significant disability, including limited ability to walk, loss of independence, chronic pain, and consequent depression and isolation.

Who should be screened?

The United States Preventive Service Task Force recommends testing all women ages 65 and older. Other risk factors (for men as well as women) that might determine a need for earlier testing include:

- A history of a fracture over age 50
- Chronic use of certain medications (such as prednisone, depo Provera®, seizure medications, proton pump inhibitors)
- Hip fracture or osteoporosis in a sibling or parent
- Small body build
- Cigarette smoking
- Low calcium intake
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Menopause before age 45 without estrogen replacement therapy
- Infrequent physical activity
- Certain medical diseases including rheumatoid arthritis, ulcerative colitis, hyperthyroidism

How to screen for osteoporosis?

An x-ray called DEXA (dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry) is most commonly used to measure bone mineral density. It can confirm a diagnosis of osteoporosis or monitor response to treatment. Results of a bone mineral density test are reported with a number called a **T-score**. The T-score represents how your bone density compares to that of healthy 30-year old adults with peak bone density. The lower the number (shown as a minus), the thinner the bone.

- **Normal** T-score at -1.0 and above.
- **Low bone mass (Osteopenia)** T score between -1.0 and -2.5.
- **Osteoporosis** T score at or below -2.5.

In addition, FRAX scores are also now included on DEXA reports. The FRAX score is a calculation that predicts your chance of fracture in the next ten years, combining the DEXA's T-score result and information about the presence of other risk factors (see the list above).

Please talk with your doctor about screening options and questions you may have. For more information, you can go to:

- Sutter Health: <http://www.sutterhealth.org/health/healthinfo/>
- National Osteoporosis Foundation: www.nof.org