

# Dryden Family Medicine

Family Practice, and Preventive Care

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Osteopenia – what does this mean to me?

When I am told I have osteopenia or I have a bone density test that shows osteopenia what do the results mean? —Most often you are told you have osteopenia on the basis of a bone density test but the diagnosis could come from the appearance of your bones on a regular x ray or in the course of an assessment after a broken bone.

The results of a bone density test are called "T" and "Z" scores. Of the 2 numbers, the T-score is more important. The "T-score" results in one of the final results for you:

Normal bone density — People with normal bone density have a T-score between +1 and -1. People who have a score in this range are not at high risk for broken bones and do not usually need treatment. Still, it makes sense for them do things to prevent bone loss. For instance, they should eat foods rich in calcium and vitamin D, and do exercise.

Osteopenia (also known as low bone mass) — Osteopenia is the term doctors use when bone density is lower than normal but not as low as it gets with osteoporosis. A person with osteopenia does not yet have osteoporosis but is at an elevated risk of having a broken bone and of developing osteoporosis. People with osteopenia have a T-score between -1.1 and -2.4. They usually need to do things to prevent bone loss. . For instance take calcium and vitamin D supplements. You should also exercise. Sometimes it can mean taking a medicine.

Osteoporosis — People with osteoporosis have a T-score of -2.5 or less. They are at higher risk for a broken bone. If you discover that you have osteoporosis, there are lots of things you can do to lower the chances that you will break a bone. For instance, you can take osteoporosis medicines and calcium and vitamin D supplements. You should also exercise.

No matter what your bone status your risk of a broken bone is reduced if you prevent falls! This means:

1. Remain strong – exercise regularly.
2. Maximize your balance – again, exercise and walking help keep balance maximized.
3. Avoid falls at night by using night lights and prevent tripping over things by removing throw rugs and objects in your path of walking.
4. Make sure your vision is at its best,
5. and, if you feel, you are unsteady mention it to your practitioner.