

6. How Do Doctors Diagnose Osteoporosis?

The test used to diagnose bone thinning is DEXA (Dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry) scan which measures the bone density. The test is expensive and ordered when the doctor suspects an increased risk for Osteoporosis:

- Women who are older than 65 years
- Men older than 70 years with a history of frequent falls (more than 3/year).
- Younger men and women may require a DEXA scan if they have an account of:
 - Breaking a bone, especially a wrist or hip with a minor injury
 - Rheumatoid arthritis
 - Smoking and drinking heavily.
 - Lean, less than average body weight -Body mass index less than 20
 - Taking steroid medications for more than three months
 - Significant backache, bone, and muscle ache

DEXA scan done once does not need to be repeated for several years. If someone has severe Osteoporosis, then a DEXA scan may have to be repeated in 1-2 years to see the treatment effect. DEXA scan score called T score helps in the assessment of the severity of bone thinning.

Dexascan T score versus severity of Osteoporosis

T score	Diagnosis
+ 1 to – 1	Normal bone density
-1 o -2.5	Low bone density or Osteopenia
-2.5 to more negative	Osteoporosis (severe thinning)
Lower than -2.5	Severe Osteoporosis

If there is severe Osteoporosis, calcium and Vitamin D may not take care of the problem. Medications that reduce further bone loss and build bone strength will be required.