

Early Diagnosis Key for Osteoporosis... *By Sherri Thomas, DO*

When I was in high school a neighbor of mine started selling cosmetics. Although she was in her early 50's, such an array of lipsticks and eye shadow quickly made her one of my best friends. I was shocked the day I knocked on her door and she answered the door with an immobilizer on her right arm and several long metal pins coming out of her wrist. I assumed she had fallen down her stairs, but oddly enough, she had just been pulling a weed out of her garden when her wrist shattered. She had osteoporosis and this fracture was the first symptom.

Many patients with osteoporosis have the same experience...neither they nor their physicians know they have osteoporosis until the break a wrist, hip or vertebra doing something as simple as weeding their garden or tripping over the bathroom rug. Many, particularly those with vertebral fractures, spend their "golden years" suffering from chronic pain and additional fractures.

With such devastating complications, it is important to identify those patients who are at risk for osteoporosis and screen them early. The good news is that there are several ways to treat osteoporosis and prevent fractures when diagnosed in the early stages.

Who should be screened? I'm so glad you asked!

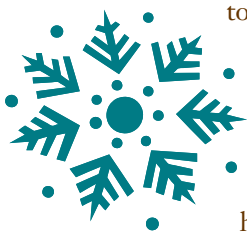
- All women postmenopausal women age 65 and older
- All men over age 70
- Postmenopausal women younger than age 65 and men ages 50-70 who have any of the following:
 - Fragility fractures (bone break resulting from a normal activity)
 - Rheumatoid arthritis
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Eating disorders
 - Early menopause (this includes men

- with low testosterone)
- Significant height loss
- Long term tobacco use
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Steroid use (everyday for more than three months)
- Three or more alcoholic drinks per day on most days of the week
- History of hormone treatment for breast or prostate cancer

If you fall into any of these categories, it's time to get screened. For your convenience we are able to perform a DEXA scan (bone mineral density testing) here in the office and it is as simple as lying on a table for a few minutes. If you are at risk and have never been screened, talk to your provider today to get scheduled. As always, check your insurance plan to determine if screening bone density is covered.

Tis the Season...

Thunderbird Internal Medicine wishes you and your family a stress-free, happy and healthy holiday season. While your biggest health concern might involve watching those excess calories, we'd like to remind you of the single most important step you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs: hand washing.



Most people will be enjoying a lot more socializing this month. To help keep germs at bay, wash your hands frequently with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds. You should use an alcohol-based product when a sink isn't available.



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