

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, 28 million Americans are at risk to develop Osteoporosis, the “silent disease”. 80 percent of those Americans will be women.

Osteoporosis is a disease that weakens a person’s bones which can result in a loss of bone mass and strength. This can in turn make the bones more susceptible to unexpected and sudden fractures. These fractures often occur in the spine, hips or wrists. Osteoporosis is known as the silent disease because there are often no symptoms. In many cases the first “symptom” of osteoporosis is a fractured bone. 1 in 2 women over the age of 60 will suffer a fracture due to osteoporosis; 1 in 3 men will also suffer a fracture from osteoporosis. The U.S.A. is in the top 5 countries in the world where a hip fracture is likely to occur from osteoporosis! According to the World Health Organization, a 50 year old woman has a similar lifetime risk of dying from hip fracture as from breast cancer.

**What can you do to treat this disease?** Osteoporosis is not curable but it is treatable. It’s important to talk with your healthcare provider as there are medications that your health care provider can prescribe to treat osteoporosis. Diet and exercise are also very important in controlling this disease.

**How do you know if you have osteoporosis?** Lower Umpqua Hospital offers bone density testing on our DEXA (or DXA) unit. DEXA stands for Dual Energy Xray Absorption. A DEXA scan is the only test that can diagnose osteoporosis before a broken bone occurs. A DEXA scan is considered the “Gold Standard” for bone density testing.

**What can you expect during a DEXA Scan?** At Lower Umpqua Hospital, we ask that you arrive for your examination wearing loose comfortable clothing without metal over the lower abdomen or hips. If you are taking calcium treatments or vitamin supplements, you should stop taking them 3 days prior to your test. The technologist will invite you into the exam room and record your height and weight as well as other pertinent health information about you. During this painless, non-invasive exam, the technologist will position you on the DEXA couch by having you lie down. The scanner will move slowly over you while it produces the images of your lower back and hips. The whole process usually takes less than 15 minutes.

**What happens after the test?** After you are finished with your DEXA scan, the technologist will provide the data to one of Lower Umpqua Hospitals board certified Radiologists. The radiologist will interpret the results and provide a report for your health care provider, usually in less than 24 hours.

If you have any questions about DEXA exams or any radiology exams, please call the Lower Umpqua Hospital Radiology Department at 541.271.6326