Understanding Osteopenia: Your Guide to Stronger Bones

What Is Osteopenia?

Osteopenia means your bone density is lower than normal, but not low enough to be classified as osteoporosis. It is a warning sign that bones may become weaker over time if not properly managed. Your recent DEXA scan shows osteopenia, which means this is the right time to focus on prevention.

Why This Matters

Bones naturally lose density with age, especially after menopause due to lower estrogen levels. Without intervention, osteopenia can progress to osteoporosis, increasing fracture risk.
The good news: You do not currently need prescription medication, and this stage is very manageable with lifestyle changes.

Your Fracture Risk

Based on your scan and risk calculation:
- Your 10-year risk of a major fracture is low to moderate
- You do not meet criteria for osteoporosis medication at this time

Prevention is the key focus.

How to Strengthen Your Bones

1. Calcium Intake

You need approximately 1,200 mg of calcium per day (from food + supplements combined).
Good food sources:
- Dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese)
- Almond milk or fortified plant milk
- Leafy greens
- Canned salmon with bones
- Fortified cereals

If your diet is low in calcium, an over-the-counter supplement is appropriate.

2. Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium.
Recommended: 1,000–2,000 IU daily (unless otherwise directed).
Vitamin D can also come from sunlight exposure.

3. Weight-Bearing Exercise

Exercise tells your bones to stay strong.
Helpful activities:
- Walking
- Light jogging
- Strength training

- Resistance bands
- Bodyweight exercises
- Stair climbing

Aim for:

- 30 minutes most days of the week
- Strength training 2–3 times per week

4. Prevent Falls

Strong bones matter, but preventing falls is just as important.

- Wear supportive shoes
- Keep home walkways clear
- Use handrails on stairs
- Be cautious on uneven surfaces

5. Lifestyle Factors

Avoid:

- Smoking
- Excess alcohol
- Long-term inactivity

Maintain:

- Healthy body weight
- Adequate protein intake

Pain Management for Degenerative Changes

Your imaging showed mild age-related joint and spine changes. For discomfort:

- Ibuprofen as needed (if tolerated) if not contraindicated
- Cyclobenzaprine occasionally for muscle spasm if not contraindicated
- Stretching and physical therapy can be very helpful

If pain persists, you may consider orthopedic consultation.

Follow-Up

- Repeat DEXA scan in 5 years unless risk factors change
- Notify us sooner if you experience:
- A fracture
- Significant height loss
- Worsening bone pain

The Bottom Line

Osteopenia is manageable. With proper nutrition, exercise, and fall prevention, you can protect your bone health and reduce your fracture risk.

Please reach out with any questions.

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