

# Osteoporosis

## Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes loss of bone density, or bone mass, leaving bones thin and weak. These bones may break easily. One in 2 women and 1 in 4 men will have a fracture (or break) caused by osteoporosis, according to the National Osteoporosis Foundation.

Bone is growing, living tissue. Old bone cells break down and new cells replace them. More bone is added than removed during childhood and teen years, making bones dense and heavy.

After age 30, bone cells break down faster than they grow. This results in a loss of bone mass. Bones can become weak and brittle. Osteoporosis has no symptoms.

A woman's risk of osteoporosis increases once she reaches menopause. Women lose up to 20 percent of their bone mass during the first 5 to 7 years after menopause. The decrease in estrogen (a hormone) leads to slower bone growth. Bones absorb fewer minerals and calcium, causing them to become thinner.

By age 65, men lose bone mass at the same rate as women.

## Who is at Risk

Risks you cannot change:

- being a woman
- getting older
- having a family history of fractures
- being Caucasian or Asian

Risks you can change:

- using certain medicines, such as steroids and anti-seizure medicines, for a long time (**Important:** Do not stop taking any medicine without talking to your health care provider.)
- having low estrogen levels (women) or low testosterone levels (men)
- not getting regular exercise
- smoking cigarettes
- drinking too much alcohol
- not getting enough vitamin D or calcium.

## Finding Osteoporosis

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that all women who have gone through menopause and who are older than age 65 have a bone mineral density test.

A bone mineral density test is an X-ray that can help your health care provider tell if you are losing bone mass.

This will help him or her tell if you are at risk for a bone fracture and when.

Your health care provider may also determine that earlier screening is needed if you have certain risks.

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## Treating Osteoporosis

Your health care provider may suggest the following for treating osteoporosis or for helping to keep your bones healthy.

- Take any prescription medicine(s) as prescribed. Talk with your health care provider about each medicine and possible side effects.
- Do weight-bearing exercises (such as walking, lifting weights, aerobics or climbing stairs). These exercises help spur bone growth. Strive for at least 30 minutes of exercise most days. If you are not used to exercise, talk with your health care provider before starting an exercise program.
- Eat a healthful diet that focuses on fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products. It includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts. A healthful diet is also one low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt and added sugars. For more information on a healthful diet, visit [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov).
- Men and women need to eat/drink 4 to 5 cups from the milk group every day. Use the chart above to see serving sizes. Foods rich in calcium include milk, buttermilk; yogurt; cheese; canned salmon or sardines with bones; dark green, leafy vegetables like kale and spinach; and fortified orange juice, cereals and breads. Good sources are soy milk and almonds. Be sure to read product labels. Talk with your health care provider about taking a supplement if you need.

- Get the right amount of vitamin D every day. Milk and other dairy products have vitamin D added to them. You should get 600 to 800 international units of vitamin D each day. Talk with your health care provider about taking a supplement if you do not get enough vitamin D in your diet.
- Do not smoke. Ask your health care provider if you need help quitting.
- Limit the amount of alcohol and caffeine you have. More than 2 or 3 ounces of alcohol or 3 cups of coffee a day keep your body from absorbing calcium.

One Calcium Serving Size
1 cup milk or yogurt
1 ½ ounces hard cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, parmesan)
⅓ cup shredded cheese
2 ounces processed cheese (American)
2 cups cottage cheese
1 cup pudding made with milk
1 cup frozen yogurt

**Good sources of calcium per serving.**