

Osteoporosis

Colorado Gerontological Society

Osteoporosis is a bone-thinning disease that makes bones more fragile. Fragile bones increase the likelihood of suffering a fracture of the hip, spine, wrist, or ribs. Osteoporosis is often thought of as a “silent” disease. This is because bone loss can happen without any signs. People really have no way of knowing their bones are becoming weak and fragile. The first awareness of osteoporosis may follow a fracture or collapsed vertebra. This often happens at the time of a fall, sudden strain, or bump. Most people don’t think about the fact that bone-related problems can shorten their lifespan. But in truth, fractures due to weak bones are a major public health threat for 44 million Americans, about 68 percent being women.

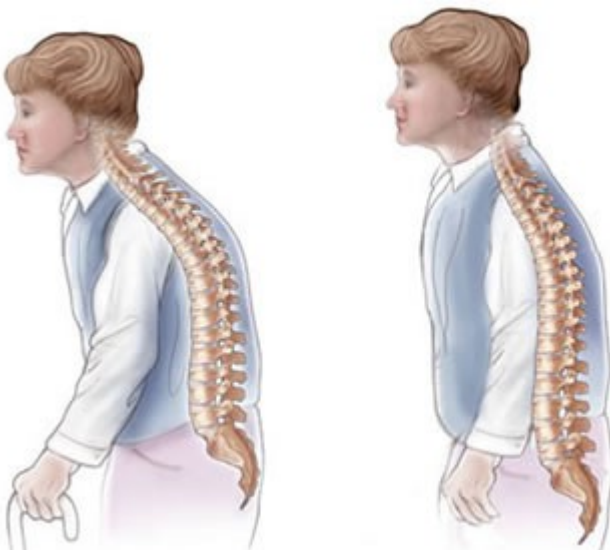
By age 65, most women lose about 35 percent of their bone mass. It is estimated that 10 million



people over 50 years of age have osteoporosis and another 30 million over 50 are at risk. Osteoporosis typically affects white and Asian women, but men can also have this disease.

The doctor can perform bone density scans and other tests to determine who is at risk for osteoporosis.

The risk of osteoporosis increases with age. At the time of menopause, women may lose bone quickly for several years. After that, the loss slows down but continues. In men, the loss of bone mass is slower. But, by age 65, men and women lose bone at the same rate



Risk Factors

- Family history of broken bones or osteopenia (Osteopenia is most often called low bone mass — bone loss has started, but patients can take action to prevent osteoporosis).
- Early menopause.
- Surgery to remove ovaries before menopause.
- Lack of calcium throughout life.
- Extended bed rest.
- A broken bone as an adult.
- Small body frame.

Preventative Measures

- Have sufficient levels of Vitamin D2 and D3. The normal range is 30 0 to 74 0 nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL) to ensure adequate amounts of calcium in the body.
- Exercise regularly to strengthen muscles around joints and help increase bone density.
- Avoid smoking and limit alcohol consumption, to avoid weakened bone structure that increases the risk of fractures.
- Discuss hormone replacement therapy (HRT) with a health care provider to keep calcium in the bones and maintain bone mass.
- Ingest a minimum of 1200 mgs of calcium daily. The upper limit is between 2000 and 2500 mgs per day. The National Osteoporosis Foundation features a daily calcium calculator.

Tips

- Stir cottage cheese or yogurt into your morning oatmeal for an extra shot of calcium plus some good protein.
- The first signs of osteoporosis are getting shorter or suffering an easily broken bone. When these signs occur, doctors will recommend a bone density test to establish a bone health baseline.

HELPFUL RESOURCE

National Osteoporosis Foundation — www.nof.org or call 1-800-231-4222

