

OSTEOPOROSIS

Osteoporosis affects more than 25 million Americans, mostly women past menopause. Approximately 1.2 million bone fractures each year in the U.S. are related to osteoporosis. The National Osteoporosis Foundation says that one in two women and one in eight men over 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime.

Osteoporosis (literally "porous bones") is a disease that thins and weakens bones to the point where they break easily, especially bones in the hip, spine (backbone), and wrist. A fall or lifting action or even a cough, which wouldn't injure a person with healthy bones, can result in fractures in people with osteoporosis. Hip fractures in particular can cause long-term, even life-threatening, problems. Inactivity can lead to blood clots, stroke, heart attack, and pneumonia.

Bone loss is usually a painless process until a fracture occurs. Thus, women often are unaware that they have osteoporosis until it is brought to their attention, suddenly, with an unexpected and painful fracture, when they are in their fifties, sixties, or seventies. The most common way that a woman may discover that she has osteoporosis is when she breaks her wrist or hip following a minor fall. Other women, as they grow older, may find themselves losing height or developing a hunched back ("dowager's hump") or find that their clothes no longer fit properly.

In the early stages of osteoporosis, there are often no symptoms at all. That's why osteoporosis is called the "silent disease". People can lose bone mass over many years but not know they have a problem until a bone breaks.

As the disease progresses, small fractures may occur in the spine. When these fractures heal, the bones do not go back to their original shape, but become compressed or flattened.

Symptoms of Advanced Osteoporosis:

- Persistent back pain
- Sudden muscle spasms in back
- Height loss
- Curving spine
- Broken bones
- Rib pain
- Abdominal pain
- Breathing problems
- Tooth loss

Facts and Figures:

- Osteoporosis is major public health threat for 28 million Americans, 80% of whom are women.
- In the U.S. today, 10 million individuals already have osteoporosis and 18 million more have low bone mass, placing them at risk for this disease.
- One out of every two women and one in eight men over 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime.
- More than 2 million American men suffer from osteoporosis, and millions more are at risk. Each year, 80,000 men suffer a related hip fracture and one-third of these men die within a year.

- Osteoporosis can strike at any age.
- Osteoporosis is responsible for more than 1.5 million fractures annually, including 300,000 hip fractures, and approximately 700,000 vertebral fractures, 250,000 wrist fractures, and more than 300,000 fractures at other sites.
- Estimated national direct expenditures (hospital and nursing homes) for osteoporosis and related fractures is \$14 billion each year.

Risk Factors You Cannot Change:

- **Gender:** Your chances of developing osteoporosis are greater if you are a woman. Women have less bone tissue and lose bone more rapidly than men because of the changes involved in menopause.
- **Age:** The older you are the greater your risk of osteoporosis. Your bones become less dense and weaker as you age.
- **Body Size:** Small, thin boned women are at greater risk.
- **Ethnicity:** Caucasian and Asian women are at greater risk.
- **Family History:** A fracture may occur, in part, due to hereditary. People whose parents have a history of fractures also seem to have reduced bone mass and may be at risk of fractures.

Risk Factors You Can Change:

- **Sex Hormones:** Abnormal absence of menstrual periods, low estrogen level (menopause), and low testosterone level in men
- Anorexia
- Lifetime diets low in calcium and vitamin D
- Use of certain medications, such as Glucocorticoids or Anticonvulsants
- An inactive lifestyle or extended bed rest
- Cigarette smoking
- Excessive use of alcohol

Treatment:

An osteoporosis treatment program includes a focus on proper nutrition, exercise, and safety issues to prevent falls that may result in fractures. In addition, your physician may prescribe a medication to slow or stop bone loss, increase bone density and reduce fracture risk.

ATTENTION: This web page is intended to be used for health information ONLY. If you or a family member has a medical emergency, please call your doctor or 911, or your local emergency service number.