

Osteoporosis

What is Osteoporosis?

The bones in your body are amazing. They're made of a lattice of living, growing tissue that changes as you age. Old bone is taken away and replaced with new bone. But as you get older this process slows down. When more bone is taken away than is made, your bones become weak and fragile. This is called osteoporosis [pronounced *AH-stee-oh-poh-ROH-sis*].

Why Should You be Concerned?

Osteoporosis means your bones break more easily and heal more slowly. Your hips, spine and wrists are particularly vulnerable. Even a small bump or fall could cause a fracture.

What are the Signs of Osteoporosis?

You may not know you have osteoporosis until you have a fracture. But there are signs. These include

- Loss of height
- Curved spine
- Stooping or bent posture
- Loss of movement
- A history of broken bones

What are the Risks of Osteoporosis?

There are many factors that increase your risk of developing osteoporosis. White and Asian women over 50 are at greatest risk. Risk factors that are not in your control include

- Family history, such as having a parent with osteoporosis
- A small, thin body
- Certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, gastro-intestinal problems, some cancers, chronic kidney disease, and thyroid disorders
- Menopause
- Low hormones or vitamin deficiencies

Risk factors that are in your control include

- Lack of exercise
- Poor nutrition
- Certain medications
- Too much alcohol
- Smoking

Your physician can diagnose osteoporosis with a variety of tests.

How Can You Prevent Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis can be prevented and treated. There are many things you can do to help prevent osteoporosis from developing. A healthy diet and daily exercise are the two best ways to prevent osteoporosis. Follow these steps to prevent osteoporosis.

1. Eat Healthy Foods

Foods that help build strong bones contain calcium and vitamin D. Get these nutrients from dairy products, leafy green vegetables and nuts. Avoid excess alcohol.

2. Exercise Every Day

Exercise increases your bone density and reduces your chances of having a fracture. Good exercises to strengthen your bones are walking, hiking, jogging, stair climbing, dancing, Tai Chi, and weightlifting. Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise every day.

3. Stop Smoking

If you smoke or use tobacco products, stop now. Smoking makes your bones weak and slows the healing process. Try these resources to help you quit:

- 1-800-QUIT-NOW
- www.tobaccofreelife.org
- www.smokefree.gov
- www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking

4. Prevent Falls

Take precautions to prevent falls:

- Have your vision checked once a year
- Keep your floors clutter free
- Remove trip hazards, like rugs and cords
- Install grab bars in your bathroom
- Make sure your rooms have lots of light
- Wear sturdy, low-heeled shoes

5. Talk with Your Physician

Review your health history, medications and side effects. Your physician may prescribe medication for osteoporosis. If you have any questions, please let us know. We're here to help you.

6. Learn More About Osteoporosis

- National Osteoporosis Foundation – www.nof.org/patients
- American Bone Health – www.americanbonehealth.org