

Osteoporosis

What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis means bones (“osteo”) that are porous (“porosis”), or weak. When your body loses calcium, your bones become weaker and more likely to break.

How is osteoporosis diagnosed?

A type of x-ray can measure the density, or strength, of your bones. This is usually done on the bones of your hip or lower spine.

Am I at risk for osteoporosis?

Everyone’s bones become weaker as they get older, but some people’s bones get weaker earlier than others. People more likely to get osteoporosis include:

- Women with early menopause
- Inactive people
- Women who weigh less than 127 pounds (57.6 kilograms)
- People who drink a lot of alcohol
- People who smoke
- People with a personal or family history of broken bones
- People with a personal history of thyroid disease or steroid use

If you have osteoporosis, you have a

higher risk of fracture (breaking a bone) if you fall. Therefore, it is important to lower your risk of falling. You can do this by exercising, which improves strength and balance. You can also add handrails on stairways and in bathrooms and remove loose rugs from your home.

What can I do to prevent osteoporosis?

Be sure to get enough calcium and vitamin D. Your body needs vitamin D to help absorb and use the calcium. You can get calcium from dairy products, vegetables, almonds, tofu, and drinks with added vitamins and minerals (such as orange juice, rice milk, and soy milk). Your body makes vitamin D when your skin is exposed to sunlight. You can also get vitamin D from milk, some fish (like salmon), and drinks or cereals with added vitamins and minerals. If you do not get enough calcium or vitamin D, you should ask your doctor about a supplement.

Make sure you exercise most days of the week. You can do things like walk, jog, hike, dance, or lift weights. It is also important to quit smoking if you smoke and to avoid drinking a lot of alcohol.

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Osteoporosis *(continued)*

How is osteoporosis treated?

You should get at least 1,200 mg of calcium and at least 800 to 1,000 IU of vitamin D daily. This can come from supplements and your diet. Your doctor may also prescribe medicines to treat osteoporosis. These could include medicines that prevent bones from breaking down, such as alendronate, risedronate, zoledronate, or denosumab. They may also use medicines that help build new bone, such as teriparatide, abaloparatide, and romosozumab. All of these medicines can help prevent bones from breaking.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation
<https://www.bonehealthandosteoporosis.org/patients>

National Institute of Arthritis and
Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases
https://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Bone
1-800-624-2663

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