

Osteoporosis in Women

What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease that thins and weakens bones to the point where they may break easily. This disease most often causes fractures of the bones in the hip, spine, or wrist.

What is the cause?

Your body is always making new bone to replace old bone. When you have osteoporosis, your bone breaks down and doesn't replace itself completely, resulting in weak bones.

Osteoporosis often starts to develop in women around the time of menopause, between the ages of 45 and 55. After menopause a woman's body makes much less estrogen. Estrogen is a female hormone that helps bones stay strong.

Osteoporosis is most common in white and Asian women, especially slim women, but anyone can have it. It's more common in women than men because women have less bone mass and lose bone sooner and faster than men.

Things that increase your risk of osteoporosis include:

- Lifestyle habits such as:
 - Smoking
 - Having more than 1 drink of alcohol a day
 - Too little calcium in the diet
- Not enough exercise to help bones stay strong, like walking, dancing, or lifting weights
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Surgical removal of the ovaries, which lowers estrogen levels
- Long-term use of some medicines, such as steroids used to treat asthma or arthritis, thyroid medicines, anti-seizure medicines, aluminum-containing antacids, and some cancer treatments
- Diseases, such as diabetes, hyperthyroidism, and heart failure
- Less commonly, too much exercise (such as training for and running marathons), which lowers estrogen levels
- Long periods of bed rest during serious illness
- Eating disorders, such as anorexia, or too much dieting

What are the symptoms?

Usually, you don't have any symptoms until a bone breaks. Broken bones are the most common problem for people with osteoporosis. Often it's the hip, arm, or wrist that breaks, usually as the result of a fall or serious bump.

The bones of the spine may also break. They can break from injury or just from lifting something heavy or suddenly bending. Fractures in the spine can cause a loss of height, back pain, and a stooping posture.

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history and examine you. Tests may include:

- A bone mineral density test, such as a DEXA scan. This test is a special X-ray exam of the spine, hip, or wrist. A DEXA scan is recommended for all women age 65 and older. If you have a high risk for osteoporosis, you should have the test by age 60.
- An ultrasound, which uses sound waves to show pictures of the bones

How is it treated?

Treatment can slow down the loss of bone and rebuild some bone. It does not restore bone strength all the way back to normal. Treatment may include:

- **Weight-bearing exercise.** Daily weight-bearing exercise, such as walking or stair climbing, helps keep your bones strong and strengthens your muscles.
- **Calcium in the diet.** Calcium helps your bones stay healthy. Adult women 19 to 50 years old should have 1000 milligrams (mg) of calcium a day. Women over 50 need 1200 mg a day. Calcium is found naturally in foods such as milk, yogurt, and cheese. It can also be taken as a supplement if your healthcare provider recommends it.
- **Good levels of vitamin D in the blood.** If you have low blood levels of vitamin D, you may need to take supplements. Vitamin D helps your body absorb and use calcium. The current US recommendations for vitamin D are 600 international units (IU) a day if you are 70 or younger and 800 IU a day if you are over 70.
- **Medicine to slow bone loss and help reduce fractures.** Medicine may be prescribed if your bone loss does not get better with other treatments. It may also be prescribed if you have had a broken bone because of osteoporosis.

How can I take care of myself and help prevent osteoporosis?

- Follow the full course of treatment prescribed by your healthcare provider. Ask your healthcare provider:
 - How and when you will hear your test results
 - If there are activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
 - What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them
- Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.
- Eat a healthy diet. Foods such as low-fat milk and dairy products, green leafy vegetables, citrus fruits, sardines, and shellfish can help you get calcium. Ask

your healthcare provider if you should take a daily calcium or vitamin D supplement.

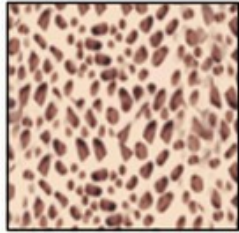
- Get regular weight-bearing exercise. Walking is especially good. Strengthening your muscles as well as your bones can help prevent falls. Ask your healthcare provider if there are any limits on your exercise.
- If you smoke, try to quit. Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to quit smoking.
- If you want to drink alcohol, ask your healthcare provider how much is safe for you to drink.
- Avoid antacids that contain aluminum, such as Amphojel, Gaviscon, or Mylanta.
- Try to make your home safe from accidents to prevent falls and injury. If you have had problems with falling, be sure to let your healthcare provider know. You may need physical therapy to improve your balance and walking.
- You can get more information from:

National Osteoporosis Foundation
800-223-9994
<http://www.nof.org>

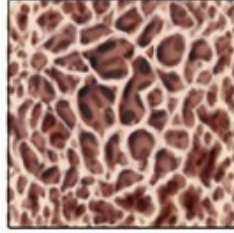
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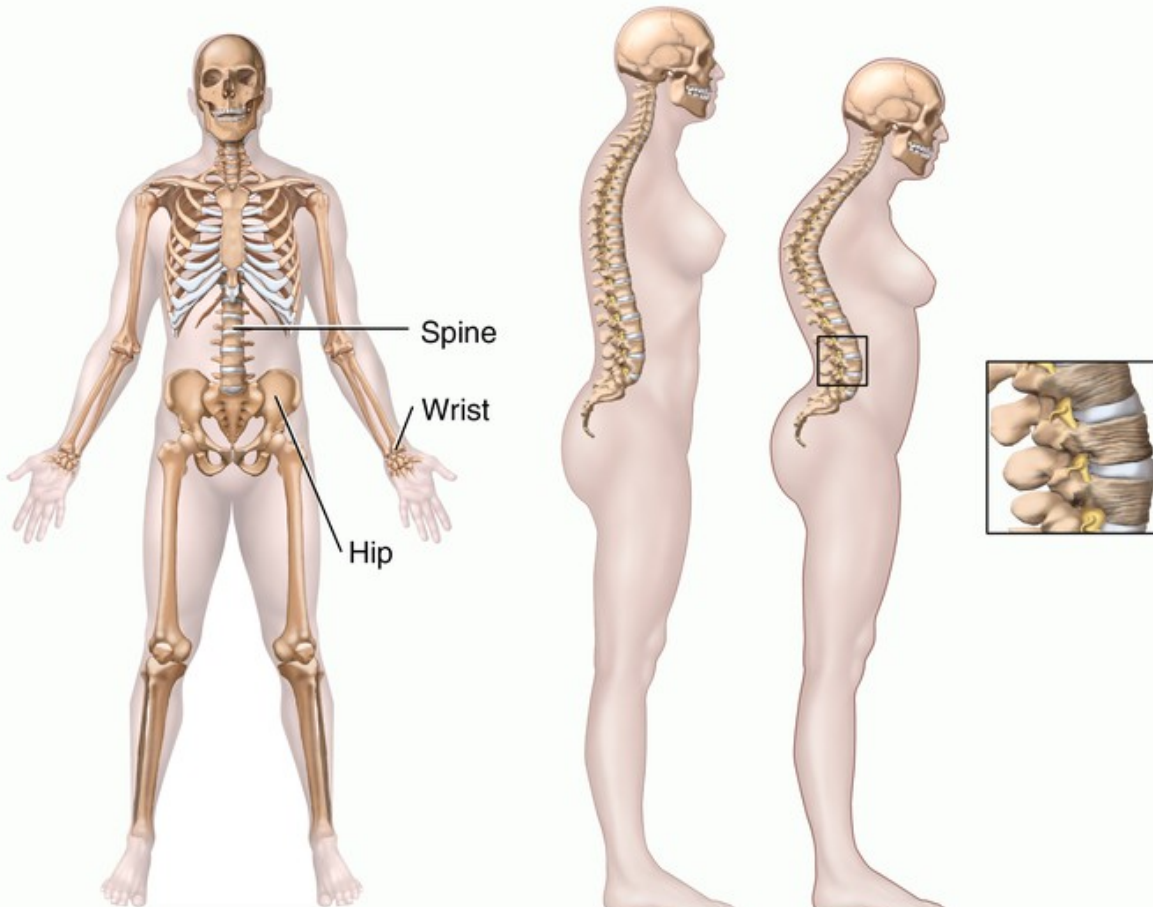
Osteoporosis



Normal Bone



Bone becomes thinner and weaker with osteoporosis.



Areas most commonly affected by osteoporosis

Over time, bones in the spine can become thin and collapse, causing a person to hunch over.

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Sources of Calcium in Foods

Dairy Foods

Food	Serving	Amount of calcium
Plain yogurt, low fat/fat free	1 cup	415 to 450 mg
Fruit yogurt, low fat/fat free	1 cup	345 mg
Milk (fat-free, low-fat, whole)	1 cup	300 mg
Frozen yogurt (fat-free, low-fat, whole)	1 cup	150 to 300 mg
Reduced-fat cheddar cheese	1 oz.	120 mg
American cheese	1 oz.	153 mg
Swiss cheese	1 oz.	224 mg
Cheddar cheese	1 oz	200 mg
Mozzarella, part-skim	1 oz	207 mg
Ricotta Cheese, part skim	1/2 cup	335 mg
Cottage cheese reduced fat	1/2 cup	69 mg
Calcium-fortified cottage cheese	1/2 cup	300 mg
Cheese Pizza	1 slice	155 to 235 mg



Nondairy Foods



Food	Serving	Amount of calcium
Calcium-fortified orange juice	1 cup	300 to 500 mg
Corn Tortillas 6 inch round	3	58 mg
Waffle 7 inch round, whole grain	1	190 mg
Pancakes 5 inch round, whole grain	2	156 mg
Beans (cooked)	1/2 cup	80 to 130 mg
Soybeans (cooked)	1/2 cup	90 mg
Tofu (processed with calcium sulfate)	1/2 cup	253 to 453 mg
Rice milk (calcium fortified)	1 cup	283 mg
Soy milk (calcium-fortified)	1 cup	300 mg
Salmon with small bones	3 oz	180 mg
Broccoli (raw)	1 cup	43 mg
Almonds	1 oz	75 mg
Calcium-fortified cereal	1 cup	250 to 1000 mg
Chinese cabbage, raw	1 cup	59 mg
Turnip greens boiled	1/2 cup	99 mg
Kale, cooked	1 cup	94 mg
Spinach, cooked	1 cup	245 mg
Spinach, raw	1 cup	30 mg

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