

## Osteoporosis: Not Just Women Affected!

Osteoporosis, sometimes referred to by individuals as “weak bones” or “deteriorating bones”, is a condition where bone weakens and becomes susceptible to fracture. This is a “silent disease” that gradually causes the bones to become fragile and fracture.

This condition occurs in 10 million Americans, 68 percent of who are women. However that is not the end of the story. There is an additional 34 million more individuals with low bone mass (osteopenia), placing them at risk for developing the disease. “The sad fact is that one out of every two women and one in four men over 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime. “ There are 1.5 million fractures of the hip, vertebrae, wrist and other locations occurring annually. (Dec. 2007, [niams.nih.gov/Health](http://niams.nih.gov/Health))

### *When does bone form?*

Bone formation is a continual on-going process within the body. The process of bone formation starts in utero. The development continues during childhood and the teen years as the new bone forms faster than it is reabsorbed—this allows for the normal growth process as the human skeleton grows and an individual reaches full height. By age 30-35 bone is at its maximum strength; then the bone resorption of bone minerals and protein slowly starts to exceed the bone formation. One challenge is to be sure you have strong bone mass in place when you reach 30-35 years of age. Bone is removed and new bone is formed throughout our lifetime; however some conditions affect this process and can lead to the development of osteoporosis.

### *What are the risk factors?*

- Both men and women can have osteoporosis, but women have less bone mass to start with and lose bone mass more rapidly after menopause.
- Chances increase with aging, especially if small and thin-boned or having a family history of osteoporosis or bone fractures
- Being a white or Asian woman
- Having osteopenia, which is low bone density

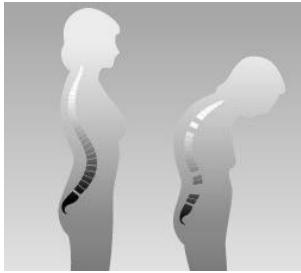
### *How can you be tested for osteoporosis?*

Testing is simple, painless, takes only a few minutes and can be done fully clothed. The most common test is called a bone mineral density (BMD) test or densitometries (DEXA) scan. This test measures bone density in your spine, hip and wrist.

The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends\* having a bone density test if you aren't receiving estrogen and have any of the following:

- You're older than age 65, regardless of risk factors.
- You're postmenopausal and have at least one risk factor for osteoporosis, including having fractured a bone.
- You have a vertebral abnormality.
- You use medications, such as prednisone, that can cause osteoporosis.
- You have Type 1 Diabetes, liver disease, kidney disease, thyroid disease or a family history of osteoporosis.
- You experienced early menopause.

\*Source: *Mayo Clinic* February 8, 2008.



*What are important ACTION steps to take to prevent osteoporosis?*

- **Calcium with Vitamin D:** Have an adequate intake of calcium and vitamin D at all stages in life. This is especially important during childhood, adolescence and early adulthood when most of the bone in the body is forming. Milk and dairy products, including yogurt and tofu are of vast importance! The challenge is to look at whether members of your household are getting sufficient calcium in their diets. (How many servings of milk per day are being replaced by “pop” drinks?) In addition to milk and dairy products, good sources of calcium include canned salmon (with bones) broccoli and almonds. (Put a piece of cheese on some broccoli and see if the kiddos will eat it that way.) Although certain green vegetables such as spinach may be high in calcium, some vegetables also contain a substance that binds calcium from its full absorption. Caffeine intake should also be limited to two or three cups a day providing you are getting sufficient calcium and vitamin D daily. Check with your physician regarding your calcium needs across the lifespan. Recommendations are based on your age and concurrent health conditions.
- **Exercise:** Weight-bearing and movement are required to keep bones strong and healthy. It

doesn't matter what type of exercise you do - just move more.

- **Cigarettes and Alcohol:** Both cigarette smoking and excessive intake of alcohol increase the risk of bone loss and fracture.
- **Sex Hormones:** The abnormal absence of a menstrual period (amenorrhea) and changes in estrogen level (low) or low levels of testosterone in men at menopause are conditions you need to discuss with your physician.
- **Medication:** The prolonged use of some anticonvulsants and glucocorticoids can deplete calcium and lead to fractures occurring.

*How do they treat osteopenia and osteoporosis?*

Treatment of osteopenia and osteoporosis should be discussed with your personal physician. This is a complex disease and not all of its causes are known.

Treatment generally falls into three categories: weight-bearing exercises, nutritional supplements and medications. Additionally, persons with the disease need to continue to maintain good posture, take safety measures to prevent falling, and collaborate regularly with a physician regarding any pain management needs they have.

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