

Bone Health

Osteoporosis is a disease that gradually weakens bones and makes them break more easily. Osteoporosis causes 1.5 million fractures in the U.S. annually, including more than 90 percent of all hip fractures, which can cause permanent disability.

Osteoporosis primarily affects women in mid-life and into older age, but it is a health issue for women of all ages:

Girls and young women need to build the strongest bones possible. Peak bone mass—when bones are the thickest and strongest—is reached between the ages of 25 and 35. After that, the bone-building process slows down and bone loss starts gradually.

Mid-life and older women need to maintain strong bones. If bone loss starts to happen too quickly, or bone building happens too slowly, bones get weaker. The chance of getting osteoporosis increases.

Women with osteoporosis need to prevent further bone loss.

Five Steps to Bone Health and Osteoporosis Prevention

- Get your bones tested. If you are 65 and older, get a bone density test. If you are between the ages of 60 and 64, weigh less than 154 pounds, and don't take estrogen, get a bone density test.
- Get enough calcium every day. You can get it through foods and/or calcium pills. Talk with your health care provider to see which kinds of calcium pill is best for you.
- Get enough vitamin D each day. You can get vitamin D through sunlight, foods, and vitamin pills. You need 10 to 15 minutes of sunlight to the hands, arms, and face, two to three times a week.
- Get moving. Being active helps your bones by slowing bone loss, improving muscle strength, and helping your balance.
- Eat a healthy diet. You can get the nutrients you need by eating foods like lean meats, fish, green leafy vegetables, and oranges.
- Don't smoke. Smoking damages your bones.
- Drink alcohol moderately. If you drink, do not drink more than one alcoholic drink per day.
- Make your home safe. Reduce your chances of falling; use a rubber bathmat in the shower or tub; remove throw rugs; and install grab bars in the bath or shower.
- Talk to your health care provider about medicine. Some medicines can prevent or treat bone loss.

Get more calcium in your meals and snacks:

- Try yogurt topped with crunchy breakfast cereals.
- Sprinkle shredded cheese on an English muffin, bagel or tortilla and heat to melt cheese.
- Add a bowl of fortified cereal to your breakfast or snack menu.
- Use products labeled "calcium-rich" or "excellent source of calcium".
- Enjoy a glass of chocolate milk or café latte for an afternoon pick-me-up.
- Pack a calcium-fortified breakfast bar in your purse for an easy, portable source of calcium.
- If you have trouble digesting the sugar found in milk, choose lactose-free milk and calcium-fortified foods.



For more information:

National Osteoporosis Foundation, (202) 223-2226, www.nof.org/prevention
UW Osteoporosis Clinical Center, (608) 263-5010, www.uwosteoporosis.org