



Understanding your bone health



Why is it important to keep your bones healthy?

Strong bones help you stay active and enjoy life as you get older. However, bones may lose their strength as you age, and weaker bones are more likely to break. In some people, they may become so weak over time that just being hugged too tightly could break a bone.



There are often no warning signs that your bones have become weaker. You may not know until you break a bone or have sudden back pain caused by a broken bone in your spine.



What is osteoporosis?

Pronounced “ahh-stee-oh-por-oh-sis,” osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become thinner than normal and more likely to break. **This can be caused by several factors, including not getting enough exercise or bones not getting enough calcium, vitamin D, and other nutrients.** Ask your health care provider if you are at risk and what you can do to help protect your bones.

Bone basics

Throughout your life, your bones are constantly changing. During childhood, your body makes new bone faster than it removes older bone. After around the age of 30, you start losing slightly more bone than you gain. This is natural. When you lose much more bone than you gain, your bones may become weaker and break more easily. This is called osteoporosis.

After 30, you start losing slightly more bone than you gain.

Take charge of your bone health.



Ask your health care provider if you should get a bone mineral density test to see how strong your bones are.

Who should get a bone mineral density test?

Women aged

65

or older

Men aged

70

or older

People after age

50

who have had
a broken bone

People at

**HIGH
RISK**

for bone loss

(see checklist
on page 5)

If you have broken a bone before ...

- If you have broken a bone as an adult, talk with your doctor and ask if it could have been caused by osteoporosis.
- If you do have osteoporosis, your health care team may be able to help you avoid another fracture.
- If you've broken a bone due to osteoporosis, your chances of having another broken bone are increased.



Start the conversation on your bone health

You are the most important part of your health care team. Review the checklist on the next page with your doctor, physical therapist, nurse, or pharmacist. Plus, consider the tips below to help manage your bone health and reduce your risk for osteoporosis and fractures.



If you eat less than 1000–1200 milligrams of calcium a day, ask your health care provider if you need to take extra calcium. Ask about vitamin D, too.



Tell your doctor

- If you have sudden back pain
- If you have lost height as you've aged
- If you have broken a bone as an adult
- If you smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol



Ask your doctor

- 1 Could any of the medicines I'm taking affect my bones?
- 2 Should I take extra calcium and vitamin D?
- 3 Are there any activities I can do to help strengthen my bones?
- 4 Is there medicine I should take to help prevent or treat osteoporosis?



Check your bone health

Use the checklist below to see if your bones are at risk for osteoporosis. The more times you answer “yes,” the greater your risk may be. **Once you have completed this checklist, you can use it to have a conversation with your health care provider.**

- I am 50 years or older.
- I am White or Asian.
- I am postmenopausal.
- I started menopause before I was 50.
- I have low hormone levels (testosterone or estrogen).
- I am considered underweight or small-boned.
- I have broken bones as an adult.
- One of my parents had broken bones as adults.
- I eat few foods that are high in calcium, such as dairy and leafy greens.
- I do not take calcium or vitamin D supplements.
- I get little to no exercise.
- I have smoked cigarettes.
- I have 1 or more alcohol drinks a day.
- I have taken steroid hormones.
- I have had chemotherapy to treat cancer.
- I have taken immunosuppressive medicines.
- I get little sun exposure.
- I eat few foods with vitamin D, such as salmon, tuna or fortified dairy or cereal.

Notes



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