

## OSTEOPOROSIS EXPLAINED

Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones become fragile and more likely to fracture. Osteoporosis occurs when the body fails to form enough new bone, when the body reabsorbs too much existing bone, or both.

---

## FACTS

- Osteoporosis is the most common type of bone disease.
  - Osteoporosis increases the risk for breaking a bone.
  - About half of all women over the age of 50 will have a fracture of the hip, wrist, or vertebra (bone of the spine) during their lifetime.
  - Bone is living tissue. Existing bone is constantly being replaced by new bone.
  - Your entire skeleton is replaced about every 10 years.
- 

## CAUSES

- A family history of osteoporosis
  - Inadequate amount of calcium to build new bone tissue.
    - Calcium is an important mineral needed by your body for bones to form.
    - If you do not get enough calcium and vitamin D, or your body does not absorb enough calcium from your diet, your bones may become brittle and more likely to fracture.
  - Smoking
  - Various childhood and adult diseases
  - Decrease in estrogen in women at the time of menopause
  - Decrease in testosterone in men
  - Being confined to a bed
  - Certain medical conditions
  - Taking certain medicines
  - Drinking a large amount of alcohol
  - Low body weight
  - Absence of menstrual periods for long periods of time
- 

## SYMPTOMS

- No symptoms in early stages of osteoporosis. Often, people have a fracture before learning they have the disease.
  - Pain almost anywhere in the spine can be caused by compression fractures of the bones of the spine. They often occur without an injury. The pain occurs suddenly or slowly over time.
  - Loss of height (as much as 6 inches) over time
  - A stooped posture
- 

## EXAMS AND TESTS: **DEXA Bone Density**

You may need other blood and urine tests if your osteoporosis is thought to be due to a medical condition, rather than simply the usual bone loss seen with older age.

---

## PREVENTION

- Calcium is important for building and maintaining healthy bone.
- Vitamin D is also needed because it helps your body absorb calcium.
- Following a healthy, well-balanced diet can help you get these and other important nutrients.
- Do not drink large amounts of alcohol
- Do not smoke
- Get regular exercise
- Medicines can prevent osteoporosis. Your doctor can tell you if any are right for you.