

Osteoporosis



Osteoporosis is a common health condition that weakens bones, making them fragile and more likely to break. It develops slowly over several years, and is often only diagnosed when a minor fall or sudden impact causes a bone fracture. Women are at higher risk of osteoporosis, especially post-menopause.

Symptoms

- Back pain, caused by a fractured or collapsed vertebra
- Loss of height over time
- A stooped posture
- A bone that breaks much more easily than expected



Cause:

- Long-term use of some medications (such as cortisone orally), and other medications such as heparin (an anticoagulant), as well as epilepsy medications;
- Some endocrine disorders such as: hyperactivity of the thyroid and parathyroid glands, Cushing's syndrome, and deficiency of estrogen;
- The density of women's bones decreases dramatically in the few years post-menopause, particularly if the menopause begins early (before the age of 45).

Risk factors

Some risk factors for osteoporosis are out of your control, including:

- **Your sex.** Women are much more likely to develop osteoporosis than are men.
- **Age.** The older you get, the greater your risk of osteoporosis.
- **Race.** You're at greatest risk of osteoporosis if you're white or of Asian descent.
- **Family history.** Having a parent or sibling with osteoporosis puts you at greater risk, especially if your mother or father fractured a hip.
- **Body frame size.** Men and women who have small body frames tend to have a higher risk because they might have less bone mass to draw from as they age.



Treatment:

Following preventive precautions is necessary for the preservation of bone density, and hence avoid osteoporosis, in addition to avoiding falls and fractures. If a patient is diagnosed with osteoporosis, though, the physician shall determine the treatment method, based on the symptoms that the patient develops.

Prevention:

- A healthy diet
- Calcium is necessary for all women post-menopause (the intake should not be less than 1000mg a day), whether from natural dietary sources, such as dairy products (milk, cheese, leben, etc.), and vegetables (turnip, broccoli, etc.), or by taking calcium supplements. The daily intake of calcium, however, should not be more than 2000mg, to avoid the calcium-associated side-effects;
- Vitamin D is also important for the bone health. Post-menopause women consume 800 IU of Vitamin D per day.
- Quit smoking and stop drinking alcohol;
- Take regular exercise: exercising is an optimal way to preserve the bone density, strengthen muscles, preserve body balance, and, hence, reduce the risk of fractures;

