

## Osteoporosis: *The Silent Disease*



Osteoporosis is known as the “silent disease” because bone loss occurs without symptoms. The first sign may be a fracture due to weakened bones. A sudden strain or bump can break a bone. In this

common disease, bones lose minerals like calcium. They become fragile and break easily.

The U.S. Surgeon General’s report estimates that, by 2020, one in two Americans over age 50 will be at risk of developing osteoporosis. This chronic disease can be prevented, detected, and treated. It is never too late to start protecting your bones, but the sooner the better.

The National Osteoporosis Foundation promotes practicing all five steps for bone health and osteoporosis prevention:

1. *Get your daily recommended amount of calcium and vitamin D*
2. *Engage in regular weight-bearing exercise*
3. *Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol*
4. *Talk to your health care provider about bone health*
5. *When appropriate, have a bone density test and take prescribed medication*

### **What Are The Most Common Risk Factors?**

- Age— more common in older people; but can affect all ages
- Gender—women at greater risk, but men can be affected as well
- Family History of Osteoporosis

- Low Body Weight/Being Small and Thin
- History of Broken Bones
- Menopause
- Low Sex Hormones
- Inactive Lifestyle and Diet
- Alcohol Abuse, Smoking, and Some Medications

### **What Is A BMD Test?**

A bone mineral density (BMD) test can help determine bone health. There are several methods for measuring bone density. The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends a DXA scan of the hip and spine for the most complete diagnostic accuracy if available in your community. Most importantly, get tested if you are at risk. Ask your health care provider for more information about these important tests.

### **Is There A Cure For Osteoporosis?**

No, there is no cure, but a comprehensive treatment plan including various medications to slow or stop bone loss, increase bone density, and reduce fracture risk along with proper nutrition, exercise, and safety precautions to prevent falls is the best treatment regimen practiced today.

### **Where Can I Find Additional Resources?**

National Osteoporosis Foundation  
[www.nof.org](http://www.nof.org)  
1-800-223-9994

NIH Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases  
National Resource Center  
[www.niams.nih.gov/Health\\_Info/Bone/](http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Bone/)  
1-800-624-2663

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Sources: “Bone Health and Osteoporosis: A Report of the Surgeon General”, [www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/bonehealth/chapter\\_1.html](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/bonehealth/chapter_1.html)  
“Prevention”, National Osteoporosis Foundation, [www.nof.org/prevention/](http://www.nof.org/prevention/), “Prevention, Who’s at Risk?”, National Osteoporosis Foundation, [www.nof.org/prevention/risk.htm](http://www.nof.org/prevention/risk.htm), “BMD Testing, What the Numbers Mean”, National Osteoporosis Foundation, [www.nof.org/osteoporosis/bmdtest.htm](http://www.nof.org/osteoporosis/bmdtest.htm)

This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Award No. 2004-46100-03006. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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