

## Osteoporosis Facts: What All Women Need to Know

Osteoporosis is a disease caused by loss of bone which leads to less bone strength, poor bone quality, and increased risk of broken bones. The common areas in the body affected are the hip, spine, and wrists.

Osteoporosis is a women's health problem. Osteoporosis causes much pain and suffering. It affects more than 20 million American women. Women's longer life expectancy puts them at a higher risk for osteoporosis. When a woman's bones mature, at about 30 years of age, she has about 10 to 25 percent less total bone mass than a man. At the time of menopause, around age 51, there is a decrease in the production of estrogen. Estrogen is a hormone that until that time protects our bones and hearts. Menopause marks a time when women experience accelerated bone loss.

### Risks and Effects of Osteoporosis:

- A woman's risk of developing a hip fracture is equal to the combined risk of developing breast, uterine, and ovarian cancer.
- One out of every five persons who has a hip fracture will NOT survive more than one year.
- Of the women who break their hips, some will become totally dependent on others for their care, while other women with hip fracture will not be able to walk independently or have an active social life. The cost of treating osteoporosis-related fractures is over 10 billion dollars a year!

It is never too late to treat osteoporosis and prevent fractures. First, be aware of your risk factors:

### Risk Factors for Women Young and Old:

- Menopause before age 40
- Surgery to remove ovaries before normal menopause
- Not enough calcium or vitamin D in your diet
- Smoking
- Osteoporosis in your family
- Alcohol abuse
- Being thin
- Being Caucasian or Asian
- Hyperthyroidism
- Use of corticosteroids

### Tips to Keep Bones Strong and to Avoid Falls:

- Get enough calcium and vitamin D.
- Exercise 3-4 times a week for 30-40 minutes. Do weight-bearing exercise such as walking, jogging or dancing.
- Eat a normal, well-balanced diet.

- Don't use throw rugs in your home. This decreases your risk of tripping.
- Wear flat, rubber-soled shoes.
- Use a cane or walker if you need to.
- Put hand grips and safety mats in your tub or shower.
- Be sure stairways are well lit.
- Bend your knees to pick up things from the floor. This allows you to keep your back more straight.
- Quit smoking. Smoking makes osteoporosis worse.

Source: National Osteoporosis Foundation, "Osteoporosis & Women: a major public health problem."  
<http://www.nof.org/>

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