

Osteoporosis

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis (oss-tee-oh-puh-ro-sis) is a disease of the bones. People who have osteoporosis have bones that are weak and break easily.

A broken bone can really affect your life. It can cause severe pain and disability. It can make it harder to do daily tasks on your own, such as walking.

What Bones Does Osteoporosis Affect?

Osteoporosis affects all bones in the body. However, breaks are most common in the hip, wrist, and spine, also called your vertebrae (vur-tuh-bray). Vertebrae support your body, helping you to stand and sit up.

Osteoporosis in the vertebrae can cause serious problems for women. A fracture in this area occurs from day-to-day activities like climbing stairs, lifting objects, or bending forward. Signs of osteoporosis:

- Sloping shoulders
- Curve in the back
- Height loss
- Back pain
- Hunched posture
- Protruding abdomen

What increases my chances of getting osteoporosis?

There are several risk factors that raise your chances of developing osteoporosis. Some of the factors are things you can control, while some you can't control.

Factors that you can't control:

- Being female
- Getting older
- Menopause
- Small thin body (under 127 pounds)
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Caucasian or Asian race, although African American and Latinas are also at risk
- Not getting your period (if you should be getting it)
- Having a disorder that increases your risk of getting osteoporosis, (such as rheumatoid arthritis, type 1 diabetes, premature menopause, anorexia nervosa)
- Not getting enough exercise due to medical issues
- Long-term use of certain medications, including glucocorticoids (medicines prescribed for many diseases, including arthritis, asthma, and lupus) anti-seizure medications; gonadotropin releasing hormone for the treatment of endometriosis; aluminum-containing antacids; certain cancer treatments; and excessive thyroid hormone

Factors that you can control:

- Smoking
- Drinking too much alcohol. Experts recommend no more than 1 drink a day for women
- A diet low in dairy products or other sources of calcium and vitamin D
- Not getting enough exercise

To learn more about getting a bone density test, several ways to prevent weak bones, and treatment for osteoporosis, visit the [WomensHealth.gov website](https://www.womenshealth.gov)

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