



For additional copies, contact the
Coalition of Labor Union Women
815 16th Street NW, 2nd fl. s.
Washington, DC 20006
202-508-6969
www.cluw.org

Osteoporosis (Bone Loss)

Osteoporosis is the loss of bone density which creates brittle and porous bones that fracture or break more easily. Eighty percent of those affected by osteoporosis are women. Osteoporosis is called a “silent” disease because typically there are no symptoms.

Knowing your risk factors for osteoporosis and your options for prevention and treatment can reduce your risk of osteoporosis. Contact your health care provider to discuss bone density screening and other options for early detection and treatment.

Osteoporosis is highly preventable.

The Facts

- In the U.S., 10 million individuals are estimated to already have osteoporosis. Of these, 80% or 8 million of them are women.
- An additional 34 million are estimated to have low bone mass, placing them at increased risk for the disease.
- Women can lose up to 20% of their bone mass in the 5 to 7 years following menopause.
- According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, 50% of women and 25% of men over the age of 50 will suffer vertebral fractures.
- The cost of care for fractures due to osteoporosis is now as high as \$18 billion annually.
- In the United States, at least 1.5 million fractures are associated with osteoporosis each year.
- One in five hip fracture patients ends up in a nursing home, and an average of 24% of hip fracture patients aged 50 and over die in the year following their fracture.

The Risks

Both women and men of any age and ethnicity can develop osteoporosis, although risk does increase with age. You may be more likely to develop osteoporosis if you:

- Are a postmenopausal woman of Caucasian or Asian descent
- Are over the age of 50
- Are thin or have a small frame
- Have a family history of osteoporosis or broken bones
- Have low calcium intake
- Lack exercise; smoke; or drink alcohol excessively

Prevention Pointers

Fortunately, osteoporosis can be prevented and treated using a combination of diet, exercise and, when appropriate, prescription drugs.

- Eat a healthful diet, including adequate amounts of calcium and Vitamin D
- Follow a regular exercise routine, including weight-bearing exercise
- Take steps to reduce the risk of falls by removing tripping hazards and installing handrails and adequate lighting in your home
- Talk to your health care provider about your risk for osteoporosis, and get a bone mineral density (BMD) test when indicated.

Treatment Options

There are new, FDA-approved treatment options available for osteoporosis.

- Bisphosphonates is the class of drugs most commonly used in the treatment of osteoporosis. They work by increasing the formation of bone, which, over time, can lead to increased bone density. Several dosing options are available, so speak with your health care provider.

Once you and your health care provider have chosen a treatment that is right for you, make sure to stick with it. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, patients with osteoporosis cannot readily see the signs that the drug therapy is working, so they often do not take osteoporosis treatments appropriately or stick with their drug regimens over time. Taking medication consistently and as directed is the key to preventing potentially catastrophic and costly fractures.

Additional Information

Alliance for Aging Research
(800) 639-2421
www.agingresearch.org/osteo_presskit.cfm

National Osteoporosis Foundation
(202) 223-2226
www.nof.org

National Partnership for Women and Families
(202) 986-2600
www.nationalpartnership.org

Partner with your health care provider. Act now to prevent serious illness later.