

# OSTEOPOROSIS

## *What you should know*

Osteoporosis is a disease that weakens the bones which increases the vulnerability to fractures of the hip, spine, wrist and other sites. Osteoporosis is often called the “silent disease” because bone loss occurs without symptoms. The disease can progress undetected for many years. Often the first sign of osteoporosis is a fracture.

## *A Few Facts*

- Millions of American men and women are affected by osteoporosis
- 80% of those affected are women
- By age 75, one third of all men will be affected by osteoporosis
- Osteoporosis is responsible for millions of fractures annually

## *Things That Increase Your Risk For Osteoporosis:*

- Lack of exercise
- Excessive exercise that leads to disruption of the menstrual cycle (missed periods)
- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol intake (more than 1-2 drinks daily)
- Low-calcium diet
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Prolonged dieting or fasting
- High caffeine intake (more than 2-3 cups per day of coffee, tea or colas)
- High salt intake (above 2,500 mg/day)

## HERE ARE SOME PREVENTIVE MEASURES YOU CAN TAKE:

- Eat a balanced diet rich in calcium. Choose foods like fruits, vegetables (especially leafy green ones) whole grains, protein, and low-fat dairy products.
- Exercise regularly. The best exercise for your bones is weight-bearing exercise, or exercise which makes you work against gravity. Examples include: walking, hiking, jogging, stair climbing, and tennis. Always consult your physician prior to beginning an exercise program.
- Don't smoke and limit alcohol intake.
- Talk to your doctor if you have a family history of osteoporosis or no longer have the protective benefit of estrogen due to natural or surgically-induced menopause.



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*The material contained in this brochure is for general information only and is not intended to provide specific medical advice or recommendations for any individual. Your physician or other health care professional must be consulted for advice with regard to your individual situation.*

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## WHAT ABOUT CALCIUM?

Calcium plays an important role in maintaining bone. Calcium alone cannot prevent or cure osteoporosis, but it is an important part of an overall prevention or treatment program. If you don't get enough calcium from your diet, you may need a calcium supplement. *Check with your health care professional for appropriate daily recommendations of calcium specific for you.*

However, generally speaking, do not take more than 500 - 600 mg of calcium at a time. It is recommended that you spread out the calcium over the day so that you get better overall absorption. **Calcium supplements should be taken with food.**

It's important to talk with your doctor or pharmacist about possible interactions between prescription or over-the-counter medications and calcium supplements. For example, a calcium supplement should not be taken at the same time as an iron supplement as calcium interferes with iron absorption.

## THE ROLE OF VITAMIN D

You also need enough vitamin D every day in order to absorb calcium from the diet. Vitamin D is found in food, particularly fortified food, but can also be made by your body after brief exposure to the sun. A total of 15 minutes outside in the sun per day is usually sufficient for your body to make all the vitamin D you need. Too much vitamin D can be harmful, so don't take more than 800 IU per day without a doctor's supervision.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### *About Osteoporosis*

Visit [osteoporosis.org](http://osteoporosis.org) or contact the NIH Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases~National Resource Center at:

NIH ORBD-NRC

1232 22nd Street, NW

Washington, DC 20037-1292

Phone: 800-624-BONE or 202-223-0344

## WHY ARE WOMEN MORE PRONE TO OSTEOPOROSIS THAN MEN?

Women have approximately 10 to 25% less total bone mass at maturity than men, making them more susceptible to osteoporosis. However, millions of men are affected by osteoporosis and one out of eight men age 50 and older will develop fractures.

Building strong bones, especially before the age of 35 along with practicing a healthy lifestyle is the best prevention for keeping bones strong.

*Adapted from the  
Massachusetts Department  
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