

# Osteoporosis



## What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis means “porous bones.” Increased porosity makes the bones weak and more likely to break/fracture.

Bones have spaces in them which is normal. In patients with osteoporosis these spaces are bigger and therefore the bone is thinner and can break easily.

## Who is at risk for osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis affects men and women of all races and ethnic groups. The following factors are known to increase risk for osteoporosis:

- **Age** – women over the age of 65 years and men over the age of 70 years
- **Race/ ethnicity** – if non-Hispanic white and Asians
- **Family history** – those with family members with osteoporosis
- **Body size** – being small and thin
- **Smoking** – current or recent history of smoking
- **Alcohol use** – more than 1-2 drinks a day
- **Lack of exercises** – especially weight bearing exercises
- **Nutrition** – diet that is low in calcium and vitamin D
- **Medications** – steroids, some hormonal therapies, antacids, anti-epileptics
- **Change in hormone levels** – menopause, low testosterone
- **Medical conditions** – rheumatoid arthritis, other inflammatory arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, thyroid or parathyroid disorders

## What are the symptoms of osteoporosis?

- There are no symptoms for osteoporosis – therefore called a silent disease
- Fractures may be the first presentation of osteoporosis. Fractures may cause:
  - Loss of height or change in posture – due to fractures in spine
  - Low back pain

## What are common sites for osteoporotic fractures?

- The hips, spine and forearm (wrists) are the most common sites for osteoporotic fractures
- Hip fracture is most serious. Most of those who have hip fractures will need walkers or canes for the rest of their lives.
- Osteoporotic fractures in the spine are often called compression fractures. Most people may not realize that they had these fractures.

## How do you diagnose osteoporosis?

- A bone density or DEXA scan help diagnose osteoporosis or osteopenia
- If you had a fracture without major trauma your doctor may diagnose you with osteoporosis
- In rare cases, other tests such as a CT scan or peripheral ultrasound can be used to make a diagnosis of osteoporosis
- X-rays – to identify fractures
- You doctor may order blood tests to check calcium and vitamin D levels, hormone levels, kidney function

## What to do you if think you have osteoporosis?



## Resources

- The American College of Rheumatology <https://www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver/Patient-and-Caregiver-Resources>
- The Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation [www.bonehealthandosteoporosis.org](http://www.bonehealthandosteoporosis.org)
- NIH osteoporosis and bone disease center <https://www.bones.nih.gov>