



Your bones are counting on you

Contrary to common belief, osteoporosis and the broken bones it can cause are not part of normal aging. There are steps you can take at any age to prevent this bone disease and protect your overall bone health. According to the International Osteoporosis Foundation, 44 million people in the United States have the condition, and worldwide, an osteoporosis-related fracture happens every 3 seconds.

What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition that causes low bone density, which can lead to broken bones. Those with osteoporosis may experience disability, pain and the loss of independence due to the need for help in performing daily activities.

Many people do not know they have osteoporosis until the disease has progressed. In fact, there are usually no visible signs until a broken bone occurs.

Know the risk factors

As you age, your bones get thinner naturally. However, there are risk factors that increase your chance of developing osteoporosis, including:

- Being female
- Being postmenopausal
- Having a small, thin frame and a weight of less than 127 pounds
- Having a family history of osteoporosis
- Having a diet low in dairy products or other sources of calcium and vitamin D
- Cigarette smoking and excessive drinking

What you can do

Osteoporosis prevention should begin with good habits in childhood, such as frequent exercise and eating foods with calcium and vitamin D. It's important to continue these habits into adulthood, unless your doctor advises you otherwise. If you need help getting more calcium and vitamin D into your diet, you can incorporate more dairy products like milk or cheese, but you can also get them from vegetables like spinach or kale.

Additional preventive steps you can take are:

- Performing weight-bearing exercises regularly.
- Quitting if you smoke.
- Limiting alcohol use.
- Talking to your doctor about whether any medications you have been prescribed may impact your bone health.

No matter what your age or gender, osteoporosis can affect you, and if you have been diagnosed with the condition, treatments are available.

Be sure to speak with your doctor if you have questions or concerns about your bones.

Sources: International Osteoporosis Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and WebMD®

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