About osteoporosis

Osteoporosis, or porous bone, is a disease from the loss of bone mass and bone tissue. People may not know that they have osteoporosis until their bones become so weak that a sudden strain, bump, or fall causes a bone fracture. Osteoporosis usually occurs after menopause.

Fractures from osteoporosis may cause back or other bone pain, loss of height, or spinal deformities, such as hump in the spine, and a stooped posture.

If you have one or more of the following, you may be at greater risk for osteoporosis:

- Are small and thin
- Have a family history of osteoporosis
- Take certain medicines, like corticosteroids
- Are a white or Asian woman
- Have osteopenia (low bone density)
- Reached menopause before age 45
- Are a smoker
- A heavy alcohol drinker
- Have had an eating disorder, such as anorexia
- Have low calcium in your diet or a vitamin D deficiency
- Are over age 50

Preventing osteoporosis

Building strong bones may be the best defense against developing osteoporosis. A healthy lifestyle is the best way to have strong bones to help prevent osteoporosis.

- Eat a balanced diet rich in calcium.
- Exercise regularly, especially weight-bearing activities such as walking, jogging, and dancing.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Do not smoke or use tobacco products.
- Talk to your health care provider about estrogen replacement therapy if you went through menopause at an early age or have had your ovaries removed.
- Talk to your health care provider about taking calcium and vitamin D supplements.

Your health care provider may use several tests to check for osteoporosis, such as a bone density screening, or densitometry, to measure bone mass in places around your body.

Although there is no cure for osteoporosis, there are treatments available to stop further bone loss and fractures. Talk to your health care provider about treatment options.