

# Osteoporosis

## What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes very weak bones that break easily.

## Who is at risk?

Anyone can get osteoporosis, but women are more likely to get it than men.

You may be more likely to get it if you:

- are over age 50
- smoke
- have a low body weight
- have family members who had osteoporosis or broken bones
- do not get enough exercise
- drink alcohol (more than 3 drinks/day)
- take certain medicines for a long time like seizure medicines or steroids

## How do I know if I have osteoporosis?

There are tests that use either x-rays or sound waves to measure bone density. These tests are painless. Ask your doctor if you should be tested.

- X-ray tests, called DXA scans, examine your spine, hip, or wrist. DXA scans use very few x-ray waves.

- Newer sound wave tests, called ultrasounds, test your heel.

## How is it treated?

There is no way to cure osteoporosis. There are things you can do to slow it down. Talk to your doctor to make a plan to keep your bones healthy.

## Prescription Medicines

There are prescription medicines that you can take. These medicines come as a pill, a patch or a shot (injection). Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before you stop taking your medicine.

Bisphosphonates are a common type of drug given to slow bone loss. Your doctor may offer you other drugs.

- Talk to your doctor about how long you should take these medicines.
- Tell your doctor if you start having side effects like new pain in your hip or thigh. Some people who take these medicines had broken thigh bones.
- Some of these medicines may irritate your throat.
- Severe jaw bone problems may also be caused.

# Osteoporosis (continued)

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## Dietary Supplements

Dietary supplements are products that people add to their diets. They include vitamins, powders, energy bars and herbs.

Talk to your doctor before you take any dietary supplements. These may affect your other medicines and make you sick.

## Lifestyle Changes

There are lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk for osteoporosis.

- Stay physically active. Do weight bearing exercise like walking.
- Do not smoke.
- Limit alcohol use.
- Get enough calcium and vitamin D in your diet. Your doctor may suggest taking calcium and vitamin pills.

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## To Learn More:

### FDA Office of Women's Health

[www.fda.gov/womens](http://www.fda.gov/womens)

### National Institutes of Health (NIH)

[www.niams.nih.gov/Health\\_Info/Bone/Osteoporosis/](http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Bone/Osteoporosis/)

### Medline Plus

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/osteoporosis.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/osteoporosis.html)