



NEWS RELEASE

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Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis, also called the “silent disease,” is a common bone disease in which bones become thinner and more porous. Osteoporosis affects both men and women and occurs when the body fails to form new bone.

During the course of your life, your body needs the minerals phosphate and calcium to build bones. If your dietary intake of these minerals is not sufficient or if the body does not absorb enough of the minerals from the diet, bone production and bone tissue will suffer resulting in brittle and fragile bones. These bones are then subject to fracture.

You may have heard of osteoporosis referred to as the “silent disease” because it’s a disease that occurs over the course of many years. The loss of bone mass does not occur overnight. It usually occurs gradually over an extended period of time. In fact, most people are not even aware that they have osteoporosis until they fracture a bone. And it’s at that time that a person finds the disease is in its advance stages

Unfortunately, there are no symptoms associated with early signs of osteoporosis. However, symptoms occurring late in the disease include:

- Fractures of the vertebrae, wrists or hips
- Low back pain
- Neck pain
- Bone pain or tenderness
- Loss of height over time
- Stooped posture

There are many causes of osteoporosis including:

- Loss of estrogen due to menopause
- Hormonal disorder such as Cushing’s syndrome, hyperthyroidism and hyperparathyroidism
- Diet low in calcium
- Family history of the disease
- Chronic liver disease and intestinal disorders

A bone density test is used to diagnose osteoporosis. A bone density test measures bone mineral content and the strength of the bones. A low bone density test result can indicate that you may be at risk for future bone fractures. The test can also show the rate of bone mineral loss and bone gain for those receiving treatment.

The good news you can prevent osteoporosis by practicing healthy habits. Eat a diet throughout life containing calcium, phosphorus and vitamin D. Women need 1,000 to 1,500 mg of calcium everyday to reduce their risk of fracture due to osteoporosis. Post menopause, women need 1,200 to 1,500 mg of calcium. Low-fat dairy foods (like milk, cheese, and yogurt) are the best natural sources of calcium. Other foods like green vegetables, almonds, and tofu have calcium, but in very small amounts.

Vitamin D is also important in the prevention of osteoporosis. Women should take 400 to 800 IUs of vitamin D every day. Some calcium or multivitamins have vitamin D added, so check the label. Drinking fortified milk or orange juice and being out in the sunshine can add to your vitamin D intake.

Regular life-long exercise can also reduce the likelihood of bone fractures and weight-bearing exercise helps reduce bone mineral loss. Exercise such as walking, jogging, swimming, and skiing are all excellent for the bones, although they are not weight-bearing. Make sure you see your doctor for general physical exams regularly and talk with him or her about your risk for osteoporosis and the need for a bone density test.

Although there is no cure for osteoporosis, it is a treatable disease. Many medications slow and sometimes stop bone mineral loss. Talk to your doctor about proper treatment.

Source: Kaiser Permanente