

# The Bone Truth: Osteoporosis and Women

Osteoporosis is a disease that reduces bone density and makes bones weaker. This is due to the body breaking down bone tissue faster than it can create new tissue. Osteoporosis may go unnoticed until a fracture occurs, most commonly in the hip, wrist or spine – then it can be quite painful.

Women are 4 times more likely to develop osteoporosis than men because women typically have less bone density and start to lose density at a younger age and at a faster rate.

Other high-risk factors of developing osteoporosis include:

- Age 50 or older
- White or Asian women
- Post-menopause (lower levels of estrogen causes bone tissue to break down faster)
- Family history of bone fractures
- Small body frame
- Lack of physical activity
- Increased thyroid hormone
- Disordered eating that results in being underweight

After the age of 50, 1-3% of bone mass is lost each year. High risk individuals should visit their doctors to assess for osteoporosis with the following tests:

- **Bone density test** (DEXA scan) shows the doctor how much x-ray light can be seen through your bones, which allows them to assess how dense your bones are.
- **Height measurements** each year to see if there is more than a ¾ inch loss of height, which may indicate changes to the spine.

Increasing your bone mass, before the age of 30, can slow the loss of bone mass as we age. While we cannot stop getting older, there are other ways to reduce our risk of osteoporosis:

- **Increase Calcium** to strengthen your bones. Eat more dark leafy green vegetables, fish containing bones (i.e., canned salmon), soy products, and low-fat dairy.
- **Increase vitamin D** to help your body absorb calcium. Eat more egg yolks, fatty fish and fish oils or ask your doctor if you should take a vitamin D supplement.
- **Weight-bearing exercises** like jogging, walking, or climbing stairs help build strong bones. Tai Chi is a low impact exercise that is also good for bone health.
- **Reduce alcohol and tobacco use** as it can increase loss of bone mass.

Curious about how your nutrition impacts your risk of osteoporosis? Try this [Nutrient Calculator](#) to see what nutrients are missing in your diet. By testing for osteoporosis as you age and maintaining good bone density by exercising and eating right, you can help avoid broken bones.



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