

# Healthy Bones or Osteoporosis?

Your bones may seem hard as a rock, but they are actually living tissue. The body is constantly breaking down this tissue and replacing it with new tissue.

Under a microscope, young healthy bone tissue resembles a honeycomb. As you get older, the production of new bone tissue slows down and the holes in the “honeycomb” can get bigger, making them weaker and more prone to breaking.

Osteoporosis occurs when the creation of new bone doesn't keep up with the removal of old bone. In fact, osteoporosis literally means “porous bone.” It can strike anyone, but it is much more common among older women.

## What are the Signs?

Osteoporosis is often called a “silent disease,” because typically there are no symptoms in the early stages of bone loss. But once your bones have been weakened by osteoporosis, you may have signs and symptoms that include:

- Back pain, caused by a fractured or collapsed vertebra
- Loss of height over time.
- A stooped posture.
- A bone fracture that occurs much more easily than expected.

Fractured (broken) bones are not only painful, they can lead to debilitating medical problems. This is why osteoporosis is a serious issue.

## Are You at Risk for Osteoporosis?

Simply being an older woman puts you at risk for

osteoporosis. Additional risk factors include:

- Having a small body frame.
- Ethnicity: Caucasian and Asian women are at higher risk. Certain medical disorders, such as: Rheumatoid arthritis, type 1 diabetes, premature menopause and anorexia nervosa.
- Medications. Some commonly used medicines can cause loss of bone mass. These include: Glucocorticoids, Gonadotropin-releasing hormones, some cancer treatments, some anti-seizure drugs, replacement thyroid hormone, antacids with aluminum.
- Family history.
- Previous bone fracture.
- Sedentary lifestyle.
- Poor nutrition.

If you have concerns about these risk factors, talk to your doctor. He or she may recommend a bone mass density test, and discuss ways to prevent and treat bone loss.

## Take Care of Your Bones

Bones need adequate levels of vitamins and minerals to stay healthy, especially Calcium and Vitamin D. Be sure to eat a nutrient-rich diet and consider talking to your doctor about dietary supplements. Also limit alcohol and caffeine. Alcohol makes it difficult for your body to absorb calcium; and people who drink a lot of caffeine lose more bone tissue than those who don't. Cigarette smoke also harms your bones, so if you smoke now is a good time to quit. And last but not least, get active. Physical activity strengthens your bones and the muscles that support them.



CNC\_MCDOC\_23\_231