

# Osteoporosis: Can It Happen to You ?

The self-assessment below helps you determine your risk for developing osteoporosis. Check **Yes** or **No** for each question.

	YES	NO
<p><b>Are you white (Caucasian) or Asian?</b>  <i>Though people of all ethnic backgrounds are at risk, people who are white or Asian are at a greater risk.</i></p>		
<p><b>Are you female?</b>  <i>Women are more at risk due to lower peak bone mass and the loss of bone at menopause. However, men can and do get osteoporosis.</i></p>		
<p><b>Do you have a family history of osteoporosis or a hip or spine fracture?</b>  <i>Though family history increases your risk, people with no family history may develop osteoporosis.</i></p>		
<p><b>Do you have a small, thin frame or weigh less than 127 pounds?</b>  <i>Though small bones and a thin frame increase your risk, those who have a larger frame can still get osteoporosis.</i></p>		
<p><b>Are you 65 or older?</b>  <i>Bone loss occurs over time. The risk increases for both men and women over age 65.</i></p>		
<p><b>Is your total daily intake of calcium from food and supplements less than 1,000 mg ( 8 oz. of milk = 300 mg)?</b>  <i>Calcium and vitamin D are important to bone health. You need at least enough calcium to equal 3 to 4 eight-ounce glasses of milk each day. To improve your bone health, eat calcium-rich foods like low-fat milk, cheese, broccoli, orange juice, cereals, and breakfast bars. Vitamin D also helps your body absorb calcium. Vitamin D sources include exposure to sunlight, vitamin D-fortified dairy products, egg yolks, fish, and liver. If needed, supplements can also play a role in bone health.</i></p>		
<p><b>Do you exercise less than 30 minutes a day, 3 times a week?</b>  <i>Physical activity throughout life helps develop and maintain bone mass. Weight-bearing exercise (walking, dancing) is recommended at all ages. Resistance exercise (light weight lifting) is recommended after age 14. Persons age 35 and older should consult with their health care provider before beginning an exercise program.</i></p>		
<p><b>Do you now or have you ever smoked cigarettes?</b>  <i>Smoking appears to lower estrogen levels, which increases the risk of osteoporosis. Smoking also appears to be linked with earlier menopause, when the rate of bone loss dramatically increases.</i></p>		
<p><b>Do you now or have you ever consumed an average of 14 or more alcoholic beverages per week?</b>  <i>Drinking more than two alcoholic beverages per day can increase your risk of bone loss and fractures. This daily amount of alcohol may lead to poor nutrition (less calcium and other important nutrients) and to a greater risk of falling.</i></p>		
<p><b>Have you ever taken thyroid medications, cortisone-like drugs (such as prednisone), or anti-seizure medications (sometimes used for migraines) for 3 months in a row or longer?</b>  <i>Long-term use (more than 3 months) of thyroid medications, cortisone-like drugs, antiepileptic medications or drugs to lower testosterone or estrogen levels can increase your risk of bone loss. Other drugs and many diseases also lead to increased risk. Ask your pharmacist or health care provider about your medications to thoroughly evaluate your risk.</i></p>		
<p><b>Have you ever broken bones during adulthood?</b>  <i>Often, the first symptom of osteoporosis is a fracture or broken bone. With osteoporosis, even a simple activity such as picking up a grocery bag can cause a fracture. If you've had one fracture, you may be at higher risk for another fracture.</i></p>		

FOR WOMEN ONLY	YES	NO
<p><b>Have you had an abnormal absence of menstruation before menopause (missed periods for 12 months or more, not including pregnancy) ?</b></p> <p><i>Low estrogen levels can change the pattern of menstrual periods. These low levels may be due to eating disorders, excessive exercise or other hormonal problems. Estrogen loss during adolescence can have a significant effect on bone health. Failure to achieve maximum bone strength before age 30 can increase the risk of osteoporosis later in life.</i></p>		
<p><b>Have you had early or surgical menopause (ovaries removed) or had your estrogen production lowered with medication (before age 45)?</b></p> <p><i>All of these situations increase the number of years that women have lower estrogen levels. This lowered estrogen level will increase the risk of osteoporosis.</i></p>		
<p><b>Are you no longer menstruating and are not taking bone protective medications?</b></p>		
FOR MEN ONLY	YES	NO
<p><b>Have you been treated for prostate cancer or ever had low blood testosterone levels?</b></p> <p><i>Hormones are important in bone health. Low testosterone levels can increase the risk of osteoporosis. Treatment for prostate cancer involves depressing testosterone levels. Such treatment may also be a risk factor.</i></p>		

The more times you answered “yes”, the greater your risk for developing osteoporosis. If you answered “yes” to 3 or more questions:

1. Talk to your doctor about your personal risk for the disease.
2. Consider having a bone density test.
3. Modify the risk factors that you can change.

## Lowering Your Risk: Changing Your Lifestyle

Building strong bones, especially before the age of 30, can be the best defense against developing osteoporosis. A healthy lifestyle is important to keep bones strong.

Four important steps to prevent osteoporosis:

1. A balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D
2. Weight-bearing and resistance exercises
3. A healthy lifestyle with no smoking or excessive alcohol use
4. Bone density testing and medications when appropriate

