

What is Osteoporosis?

Make no bones about it! Your bones do a lot for you. They hold you up. They support you as you move. And they protect your organs, like your brain, heart, and lungs.

But did you know that bone is living tissue? It's constantly changing through a process where old bone is broken down and replaced by new bone. Up until about age 30, our bodies naturally build more bone than we lose. And in young, healthy adults, about the same amounts of bone are removed and replaced. But as adults get older, this process can become unbalanced and certain bone diseases can develop.

In a condition called osteoporosis, old bone is removed more quickly than it's replaced. This can make the bones weak and brittle—often without any warning signs. It can cause your bones to break more easily, even from a minor fall or everyday activities like bending over.

Osteoporosis can affect anyone. We all lose bone mass as we get older, raising our risk for the disease. But you may be at a higher risk for osteoporosis if you:

- Were assigned female at birth;

- Have a family history of the disease;
- Are smaller in body size;
- Have a health problem that may affect your bones, like diabetes;
- Take certain medicines, such as steroids;
- Or have low levels of certain hormones.

Depending on your personal risk for osteoporosis, your healthcare provider may screen you for the disease. A bone density test can tell if your bones are weak. You can help prevent osteoporosis with lifestyle changes that keep your bones strong.

These include: Getting enough calcium and vitamin D; Choose healthy foods that are high in these nutrients; like low-fat milk, yogurt, or cheese; Being more physically active. Try for 30 minutes a day; Not smoking. Your healthcare provider can help you quit, if needed. And limiting how much alcohol you drink.

If you're diagnosed with osteoporosis, your provider may give you medicine to help slow down bone loss or build new bone in your body. These include medicines like bisphosphonates or RANKL inhibitors.

Your provider may also add some lifestyle changes to your treatment plan. These can include some of the same activities used to prevent osteoporosis, like being physically active and getting more calcium and vitamin D.

With all that your bones do for you, give them some support in return. Talk with your healthcare provider about how you can keep your bones healthy and strong.