



Osteoporosis



Overview

As you get older, your bones may get weaker. This is called "osteoporosis." Weak bones are more likely to break. Osteoporosis can be a problem for anyone, but it is more common in women.

Causes

Your body is always rebuilding your bones. When bone cells get old, they break down and get replaced. But as you age, your body can't keep up. Old bone breaks down faster than it can be replaced. Your bones gradually lose some of their strength. If they get too weak, you are said to have osteoporosis.

Risk Factors

Older women have the greatest risk for this. Your risk is higher if you are white or Asian, and if you are small. Osteoporosis can run in families. Smokers, heavy drinkers and people who are not active have a higher risk. Your risk is higher if you don't eat enough foods with calcium, and if you have certain digestive disorders. You also have a higher risk if you have problems with your hormones, or if you take certain medications.

Symptoms

Osteoporosis can cause your back to hurt. Your back may begin to curve forward. You may get shorter. And you may break a bone easily, even by coughing or bending over.

Treatment

Treatment depends on your needs. Medications can help keep your bones from getting any weaker. You may also benefit from a healthier lifestyle. Your healthcare provider can create a care plan that is right for your needs.