

# Preventing Osteoporosis

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Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones have decreased bone mass and thus become more fragile. If undetected and left untreated, osteoporosis can progress symptom free until a bone breaks. Peak bone mass is reached by about the age of 30 after which time, the bone essentially recycles itself. At this stage, the bone breaks down faster than it re-forms which results in a gradual loss of bone mass. A number of factors can result in a more rapid loss of bone mass and lead to osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is most prevalent in women over the age of 50, but this disease can affect anyone of any gender, race, or age, so it is essential to take care of your bones. You can prevent osteoporosis by eating right, exercising, and talking with your doctor about osteoporosis.

It is essential that calcium and vitamin D are a part of your diet. Without them, you will have bone loss. Calcium is found in dairy products and dark green vegetables like broccoli and kale. Calcium supplements are also available. Vitamin D is available in a supplement, but also 15-20 minutes of sunlight per day will boost the body's production of Vitamin D. Consult with your doctor if you are concerned that you are not getting enough of these vitamins.

Some lifestyle changes can also decrease your risk of developing osteoporosis. Some recommendations include: stop smoking, limit alcohol consumption, and cut back on caffeinated beverages.

Weight bearing exercises and strength training will also aide in the prevention of bone loss. It has been determined that weight bearing exercises such as walking, jogging, stair climbing, weight lifting, aerobics, tennis, dancing, etc. are most beneficial in maintaining bone health. These exercises must be done on a regular basis for benefits. This means at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise each day. Remember to consult your doctor if you have any conditions that would limit your participation in an exercise program.

Good posture and body mechanics are important in minimizing the effects of the disease. Good posture while standing is defined as a straight vertical alignment of your body from the top of your head, through your body's center, to the bottom of you feet. In sitting, good posture is best obtained by placing a narrow, soft pillow behind your waist to keep the spine and head erect while maintaining the natural curves of the back.