

NUTRIFAX[©]

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Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis means porous bone. Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become weak and brittle, often leading to bone fractures. Osteoporosis affects 25 million Americans and leads to over 1 million fractures each year.

There are many identifiable risk factors that influence the rate of bone loss like age, gender, menstrual history, and heredity which are not controllable. Controllable lifestyle factors that increase the risk for developing osteoporosis include smoking, alcohol consumption, inadequate dietary calcium, and minimal weight bearing exercise (jogging, aerobics, weight lifting).

Throughout life the body is continuously breaking down and rebuilding bone. At birth our bones contain very little calcium. Through childhood, adolescence and young adulthood our bones develop until reaching their peak density (strength) in our mid 30's. Typically men reach a higher bone density peak than do women. After age 35, our bones begin to slow down the rebuilding process. For women, decreased estrogen due to menopause can also speed up the breaking down

process. When bone loss becomes severe, osteoporosis has developed.

Unfortunately osteoporosis is often not diagnosed until a fracture has occurred. These fractures usually occur at the wrist, hip or vertebrae (backbone). Fractures can be painful and can also lead to restricted mobility and decreased independence.

Adding calcium to your diet does not have to be difficult. The best way is through eating a variety of foods rich in calcium. Dairy products, greens, fortified fruit juice, cereals, sardines and salmon are good sources.

Help for the Lactose-Intolerant Person

If you lack the enzyme needed to digest lactose you still may be able to obtain calcium from dairy products. These suggestions might work for you:

- Eat small portions of dairy foods
- Combine dairy foods with other foods
- Try non-milk dairy foods.
- Many cheeses (Cheddar, Swiss, and Parmesan) contain less lactose than milk.
- Many cultured dairy foods such as yogurt are generally well tolerated.

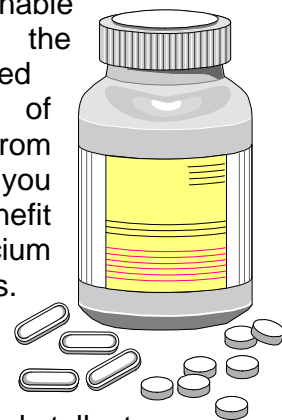
The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends a combination of these four steps to help prevent osteoporosis:

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

Calcium Supplements

If you're unable to obtain the recommended amount of calcium from your diet, you may benefit from calcium supplements.

Always read the directions carefully and talk to your physician. Choose a calcium supplement with vitamin D, unless you are already getting vitamin D from other sources.



Food and Nutrition Services can assist in providing nutrition information.
Call 703-813-4800 and ask for a Registered Dietitian.