

## Osteoporosis- Definition, Risk Factors and Prevention

Osteoporosis is a bone disease which causes a deterioration of bone density and low bone mass. This is dangerous because it causes the bones to become fragile (especially the hips, spine and wrists) and there is increased risk of broken bones and slow recovery periods. Osteoporosis can affect any bone, but special attention is placed on the hips and spine, because the breaking of these bones can result in long term injury including difficulty walking, hospitalization, deformity, loss of height, severe pain and even death. You should ask your doctor to check your bone density levels yearly, since this disease often has no symptoms at all. When a person finally does experience any symptoms, they are usually so far into the disease that what they are feeling is back pain because of a fractured vertebra.

Women are more likely to contract this disease than men, often due to menopause, in which bone loss increases. One in four women are affected with this disease, while only one in eight men are. Certain people are at a high risk factor for developing this disease however, and you should be cautious if you have any of the following risk factors. Having a personal history of low bone mass, being female, being thin (male or female) having abnormal menstrual periods for women, currently having or have had anorexia nervosa in the past, eating a diet low in vitamin D and calcium currently and throughout your life, having an inactive life style, having low testosterone levels in men, being a smoker, being a heavy drinker and being Caucasian or Asian. However, keep in mind that people with these risk factors are not the only people who can get this disease, and all people are at risk and should be checked for the disease regularly.

There are certain things you can do to prevent your risk of developing osteoporosis including consuming a diet rich in vitamin D and calcium, having an active lifestyle and doing weight bearing exercises, quitting smoking, drinking alcohol in moderation and taking regular bone density tests. Doctors and health professionals both agree that this is a very preventable disease as long as you take proper care of your health. Even if you start taking these precautions late in life, they will still lower your chance of developing the disease.

For more information, resources, and definitions on diseases please visit <http://www.mic.ki.se/Diseases/index.html>

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### About the Author

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