

# BONE HEALTH

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## BONE HEALTH & CALCIUM *Overview of Osteoporosis*

Osteoporosis is a silent disease characterized by a decrease in bone mineral density leading to fragile bones and an increased risk for fracture. Osteoporosis affects 25 to 35 million Americans, 80% are women. The consequences of osteoporosis can be devastating. Each year this disease results in a million and a half fractures, mostly of the hip, spine and wrist, leading to acute and chronic pain, disability, deformity and reduced quality of life.

The following risk factors influence bone health. Several can be modified through lifestyle changes or treatment programs to prevent future bone loss, fractures, and disability:

- Post-menopausal or early, surgically-induced menopause
- Caucasian or Asian women age 50 or older with a family history
- Small boned with thin body build
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Bone fracture after age 45
- Smoking history
- Excessive use of medications that could cause bone loss (steroids and thyroid hormones)
- Low testosterone levels in men

## STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO PREVENT OSTEOPOROSIS

- The best time to build bones is as children, through proper diet and exercise.
- Engage in regular activity such as walking, jogging, biking or low or non-impact aerobics.
- Be sure your diet includes a minimum of 1,000 milligrams of calcium a day for pre-menopausal women and 1,500 milligrams a day for post-menopausal women.
- Cut back on your intake of sodium (salt) and caffeine.
- Stop smoking. People who smoke have two or three times greater risk of spine and hip fractures.
- Limit your intake of alcohol. Consumption may accelerate osteoporosis.
- Ask your doctor about estrogen or hormone replacement therapy.