

What You Need To Know About Osteoporosis

What is Osteoporosis?

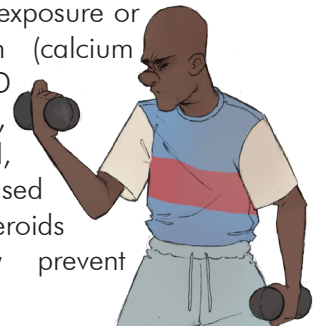
Osteoporosis is a disease that reduces bone mass consequently increasing the risk of fractures. When osteoporosis is not properly prevented or treated, bones become progressively weak and may break (fracture) from a fall, sneezing or minor traumas.

Many conditions and habits increase the risk of osteoporosis: age over 65, menopausal women, smoking, immobility (e.g. being bedridden for a long period), white skin, and genetic predisposition (family risk).

Some medications, like corticosteroids, are associated to bone loss and osteoporosis. They are often prescribed to relieve inflammation, are frequently necessary in the treatment of systemic lupus erythematosus but require great attention in order to prevent bone loss.

How can I prevent osteoporosis?

- By regularly practicing weight-bearing (when you work against gravity while standing, e.g. dancing, jogging, walking) or muscle-strengthening (when you move your body, a weight or some other resistance against gravity, e.g. lifting weights, using exercise elastic bands or lifting your own body) exercises;
- Stop smoking;
- Avoiding excessive intake of alcohol and caffeine (e.g. coffee);
- Avoid salty foods;
- Getting enough calcium and vitamin D every day, from calcium-rich foods, sun exposure or supplementation (calcium and vitamin D supplements, when indicated, should be used during corticosteroids therapy). They prevent bone loss.



The daily recommended intake are 4 servings of calcium-rich foods.
Examples:

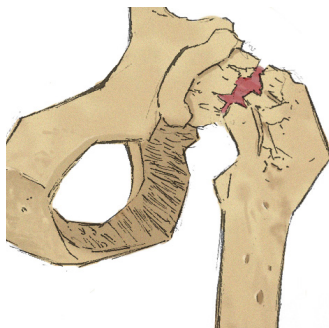
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Examples:

- Other sources of calcium: green vegetables (e.g. spinach, cabbage and broccoli).
- 2 glasses of (250mL) milk + 1 thick slice of cheese + 1 yoghurt
- OR 2 thick slices of cheese + 2 yoghurts
- OR 4 glasses of milk

How to know that I have osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is, usually, a silent disease until a bone fracture occurs after a minor trauma, leading to pain at the site of the lesion. Osteoporosis may be easily diagnosed in these cases, however, it must be, ideally, diagnosed before the fracture happens. Your doctor can find out if you have osteoporosis or if you are at risk for the disease, by evaluating bone mineral density (BMD). Blood tests (levels of calcium, phosphorus, alkaline phosphatase, vitamin D, and parathyroid hormone) may also be helpful.



How can I prevent fractures?

Besides preventing osteoporosis, falls should be avoided to decrease the risk of fractures.

Thus:

- Avoid using slippers and clogs and use only shoes or sandals tightly adjusted to the feet;
- Use non-slip shoes;
- Remove the carpets from your house, to avoid sneezing;
- Keep your house clear and well lit;
- Be careful during your shower so you do not slip;
- Place handrails at your home everywhere support is needed (e.g. at your bathroom);
- Tell your doctor if you feel dizzy or if you are experiencing any visual impairments (factors that may lead to falls).