

QUICK FACTS ABOUT OSTEOPOROSIS:

Provided by the National Osteoporosis Foundation

DEFINITION:

Osteoporosis, or porous bone, is a disease characterized by low bone mass and structural deterioration of bone tissue, leading to bone fragility and an increased susceptibility to fractures, especially of the hip, spine and wrist, although any bone can be affected.

PREVALENCE:

Osteoporosis is a major public health threat for an estimated 44 million Americans, or 55 percent of people 50 years of age and older. In the U.S. today, **10 million individuals are estimated to already have the disease and almost 34 million more are estimated to have low bone mass, placing them at increased risk for osteoporosis.**

Of the 10 million Americans estimated to have osteoporosis, eight million are women and 2 million are men.

Thirty-four million Americans have low bone mass, which puts them at increased risk of developing osteoporosis and related fractures.

One in two women and one in four men over age 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in her/his remaining lifetime.

Significant risk has been reported in people of all ethnic backgrounds.

While osteoporosis is often thought of as an older person's disease, it can strike at any age.

Women

- ***Eighty percent of those affected by osteoporosis are women.***
- Five percent of non-Hispanic black women over age 50 are estimated to have osteoporosis; an estimated additional 35 percent have low bone mass that puts them at risk of developing osteoporosis.
- Ten percent of Hispanic women aged 50 and older are estimated to have osteoporosis, and 49 percent are estimated to have low bone mass.
- Twenty percent of non-Hispanic white and Asian women aged 50 and older are estimated to have osteoporosis, and 52 percent are estimated to have low bone mass.

Men

- ***Twenty percent of those affected by osteoporosis are men.***
- Seven percent of non-Hispanic white and Asian men aged 50 and older are estimated to have osteoporosis and 35 percent are estimated to have low bone mass.
- Four percent of non-Hispanic black men aged 50 and older are estimated to have osteoporosis, and 19 percent are estimated to have low bone mass.
- Three percent of Hispanic men aged 50 and older are estimated to have osteoporosis, and 23 percent are estimated to have low bone mass.

(more)

COST:

The estimated national direct expenditures (hospitals and nursing homes) for osteoporotic and associated fractures were \$17 billion in 2001 (**\$47 million each day**) and the cost is rising.

SYMPTOMS:

Osteoporosis is often called the "silent disease" because bone loss occurs without symptoms. People may not know that they have osteoporosis until their bones become so weak that a sudden strain, bump or fall causes a fracture or a vertebra to collapse. Collapsed vertebrae may initially be felt or seen in the form of severe back pain, loss of height, or spinal deformities such as kyphosis or stooped posture.

RISK FACTORS:

Certain people are more likely to develop osteoporosis than others. Factors that increase the likelihood of developing osteoporosis are called "risk factors." These risk factors include:

- Current low bone mass
- Being female
- Being thin and/or having a small frame
- Advanced age
- A family history of osteoporosis
- Estrogen deficiency as a result of menopause, especially early or surgically induced
- Low lifetime calcium intake
- Vitamin D deficiency
- An inactive lifestyle
- Current cigarette smoking
- Excessive use of alcohol

Women can lose up to 20 percent of their bone mass in the five to seven years following menopause, making them more susceptible to osteoporosis.

PREVENTION:

By about age 20, the average woman has acquired 98 percent of her skeletal mass. Building strong bones during childhood and adolescence can be the best defense against developing osteoporosis later. There are four steps, which together, can optimize bone health and help prevent osteoporosis. They are:

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

Medical experts agree that osteoporosis is highly preventable. However, if the toll of osteoporosis is to be reduced, the commitment to osteoporosis research must be significantly increased. It is reasonable to project that with increased research, the future for definitive treatment and prevention of osteoporosis is very bright. The National Osteoporosis Foundation is the nation's leading resource for patients, healthcare professionals, and organizations seeking up-to-date, medically sound information on the causes, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of osteoporosis.

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