



## Osteoporosis: Treatments



The process of bone thinning is a natural part of aging. But you can slow or delay osteoporosis by making simple changes in your habits.

Treatment for osteoporosis includes eating a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D, getting regular weight-bearing exercise, and taking drugs to slow bone loss and increase bone thickness.

Even little changes can help prevent a broken bone.

### Medicine for osteoporosis

Bisphosphonates are the most commonly prescribed drugs for osteoporosis. They come as a pill or as an injection into the vein. Side effects are not common when you take the medicine as directed.

If you are taking a bisphosphonate by mouth:

- Take your medicine with a full glass of water when you first get up in the morning.
- Do not lie down, eat, drink a beverage, or take any other medicine for at least 30 minutes after you take the drug. This helps prevent stomach problems.

- Do not take your medicine late in the day if you forgot to take it in the morning. Skip it, and take the usual dose the next morning.
- If you have side effects, tell your doctor. There may be another medicine you can try.

Other drugs used to treat osteoporosis include calcitonin, raloxifene, and teriparatide.

### Lifestyle changes

#### Eat healthier

Make sure you get enough calcium and vitamin D. They are necessary for building healthy, strong bones. The Recommended Dietary Allowance for calcium and vitamin D is:

- 1,000 mg of calcium and 600 IU of vitamin D each day for adults ages 19 to 50 and men ages 51 to 70.
- 1,200 mg of calcium and 600 IU of vitamin D each day for women ages 51 to 70.
- 1,200 mg of calcium and 800 IU of vitamin D each day for adults ages 71 and older.
- Eat foods rich in calcium, like yogurt, cheese, milk, and dark green vegetables. This is the best way to get the calcium you need. You can get vitamin D from eggs, fatty fish, cereal, and milk.
- Talk to your doctor about taking a calcium and vitamin D supplement.

#### Change your habits

Weight-bearing exercises help prevent bone loss. These exercises include walking, jogging, climbing, or dancing. Start out slowly. Aim for at least 2½ hours of moderate exercise a week. Aim for 2 to 3 days a week for lifting weights.

Exercises that are not weight-bearing, such as swimming, are good for you. But because they do not work your muscles and bones against gravity, they do not help your bones as much.

Do exercises that improve balance and coordination, such as tai chi. They help reduce your risk of falling.

Do not drink more than 1 alcoholic drink a day for women or 2 alcoholic drinks a day for men. Drinking more than this puts you at higher risk for osteoporosis.

Try to avoid cola soft drinks. Cola, but not other carbonated soft drinks, may cause low bone mineral density in women.

Do not smoke. People who smoke lose bone density faster than people who do not smoke.

Check your home for changes you can make to prevent falls:

- Remove throw rugs, clutter, or anything that you might trip on.
- Use nonskid floor wax, and wipe up spills right away, especially on ceramic tile floors.
- Keep stairways, porches, and outside walkways lit well.
- Use night-lights in areas such as hallways and bathrooms.
- Install sturdy handrails on stairways.
- Put grab handles and nonskid mats inside and outside your shower or tub and near the toilet.
- Use shower chairs and bath benches.
- Put items within easy reach so you do not need to reach overhead for them.

## Questions to ask your doctor

### Questions about osteoporosis treatment: