

## OSTEOPOROSIS

Although we may not think of it as such, bone is living tissue, meaning cells are continually being broken down and replaced. When the creation of new bone does not keep up with the purging of old bone cells, the bones become brittle and weak due to a condition called osteoporosis, meaning “porous bone.” Osteoporosis impacts everyone, but Caucasian and Asian women—particularly those post-menopause—are at highest risk. Other risk factors that are not modifiable include those with a family history of the condition or those with a slight body frame.

### RISK FACTORS

- Long-term use of prescription medications, such as oral or injected corticosteroid medications (which interfere with bone regrowth); some used to combat seizures, cancer, and reflux; or those used to support organ transplants
- Certain lifestyle factors, like inactivity, high alcohol consumption, or a diet that is low in calcium or very restricted (such as an eating disorder)
- Suffering from certain medical conditions, including celiac disease, inflammatory diseases like IBS and rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, kidney or liver disease, those who have undergone gastrointestinal surgery, and cancer
- Declining sex hormones (e.g., estrogen in postmenopausal women, testosterone in aging men and those undergoing treatment for prostate cancer, or patients undergoing breast cancer treatment)
- Climbing hormones associated with overactive thyroid, parathyroid, and adrenal glands

The upshot is that bone loss can happen at any age or for many varied reasons, and it’s important to talk with both your doctor and pharmacist about preventing the complications that can arise from osteoporosis. Screening is recommended for women (by age 65) and some men (by age 70), and some doctors recommend that women do a bone density scan even earlier (perimenopause) to provide a baseline against which to compare later screening results. Not all insurance covers the earlier test, so be sure to ask your doctor.



### RISK MANAGEMENT

Once you have assessed your risk factors, there are several other steps you can take to reduce your risk of developing osteoporosis. Among them:

- Stop smoking and reduce alcohol consumption.
- Review your intake of calcium (which builds bones) and vitamin D (which aids absorption). For most people, that’s about 1,000mg – 1,200mg of calcium daily. These bone-building nutrients can be found in a range of foods, including dairy; egg yolks; white beans; soybean; dark leafy greens like spinach, kale, and collards; some fatty fish; and fortified foods.
- Exercise regularly with weight-bearing activities that spur bone growth.