

## Aging and bone loss

As people get older, their bones get thinner. This usually speeds up after age 50, and especially after menopause in women.

## Might I have osteoporosis?

Your doctor can order a simple painless test that measures your bone density and can reveal if you have osteoporosis. Your doctor might also order some simple blood tests to check the level of calcium and vitamin D in your blood.

## How can I keep my bones strong?

Exercise, calcium, and vitamin D can all help reduce the risk of falls and/or fractures. Some people might also need a prescription medication to strengthen their bones.

## More information

For more information on osteoporosis, see the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality website at <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/guides-for-patients-and-consumers/> and the North American Menopause Society website at <http://www.menopause.org/Consumers.aspx>



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**These are general recommendations only; specific clinical decisions should be made by the treating physician based on assessment of the individual patient.**

For more information, see our website:  
[www.RxFacts.org](http://www.RxFacts.org)

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# Take care of your bones to help avoid fractures



**Osteoporosis is a medical condition that causes bones to become less solid, so they can break more easily than normal bone. It's often called a 'silent disease' because you may not have any symptoms until a fracture occurs.**

**About half of women and 1 in 5 men over 50 will break a bone due to osteoporosis. Even a minor bump or fall can cause a serious fracture in people who have osteoporosis.**



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## Exercise

Weight-bearing exercise, such as brisk walking, can help keep your bones strong. So can muscle-strengthening activities like lifting weights. Exercise can also reduce the risk of falls.

## Don't smoke, or drink too much alcohol.

Having more than 3 alcoholic drinks a day increases the risk of osteoporosis. Smoking also thins the bones - if you smoke, quit!



## Get enough calcium

Calcium helps keep your bones strong; people need to take in at least 1200 mg of it every day. Dairy products like milk and cheese have lots of calcium. You can determine the amount of calcium in your diet with an easy-to-use calculator at <http://www.myoptumhealth.com/portal/ManageMyHealth/Calcium+Calculator>

If you don't get enough calcium in your diet, you might need a calcium pill.

## Get enough Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps you absorb calcium and keeps your bones strong. People need at least 800-1,000 units of vitamin D every day, or more. Many people need to take a vitamin D supplement – especially if they don't eat enough foods rich in vitamin D, or get enough sunlight, which the body needs to process it.



## Might I need a prescription drug?

Sometimes a prescription medicine is required to help increase bone strength and reduce the risk of fracture. Several drugs are available, some of them in safe and affordable generic versions.

These medicines may need to be taken with calcium or vitamin D, and may be taken daily, weekly, or even yearly.

It is important to take your medication as prescribed, or it won't work well. If you think your osteoporosis medicine is causing a side effect, talk to your doctor.