



Focus on HEALTH



Osteoporosis and Men

By Diane E. Scott, RN, MSN

Osteoporosis is a condition known to affect women but you may be surprised to learn that osteoporosis is prevalent in men as well. In fact, according to the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Disease (NIAMS), 44 million Americans have osteoporosis with men comprising almost one-third of that population. In fact, NIAMS states that one out of every four men age 50 and older will have an osteoporosis related fracture in their lifetime.

Osteoporosis, an Overview

According to the American College of Physicians, osteoporosis is a condition in which bones become less dense, more porous, and more susceptible to fractures. It can occur at any age but is especially significant with the more mature populations. Throughout our lifetime, old bone is regularly replaced with new bone however, towards the later decades the rate of replacement slows down resulting in loss of bone mass. Areas that are particularly susceptible to fractures are the hips, spine, and wrists.

Since men have larger skeletons, osteoporosis is not thought to be a significant condition affecting

this population. However, bone loss starts later and progresses more slowly in men than in women and by age 65-70 both men and women lose bone mass at the same rate. Thus, osteoporosis is now considered to be an important public health issue for men, particularly as life expectancies rise.

Risk Factors for Men

Several factors increase the risk of osteoporosis in men. These factors include:

- Chronic diseases that affect the kidneys, lungs, stomach, and intestines or alter hormone levels
- Regular use of certain medications, such as glucocorticoids
- Undiagnosed low levels of the sex hormone testosterone
- Unhealthy lifestyle habits: smoking, excessive alcohol use, low calcium intake, and inadequate physical exercise
- Age. The older you are, the greater your risk.
- Race. Caucasian men appear to be at particularly high risk, but all men can develop this disease (NIAMS, 2009).

Prevention, for Everyone

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF) there are five steps to bone health and osteoporosis prevention.

Step One: **Nutrition**

The NOF recommends getting your daily amount of Calcium and Vitamin D. Their recommendations include:

- Adults under age 50 need 1,000 mg of calcium and 400-800 IU of vitamin D daily.
- Adults 50 and over need 1,200 mg of calcium and 800-1,000 IU of vitamin D daily.

Step Two: **Exercise**

Engaging in regular weight-bearing and muscle strengthening is an important step in overall health and prevention of osteoporosis.

Step Three: **Healthy Lifestyle**

As with many other illnesses, excess smoking and alcohol consumption contributes to the proliferation of osteoporosis.



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Step Four: **Consult your Healthcare Provider**

Especially if you are at risk, the NOF highly recommends that you discuss your concerns about your bone health to your primary care provider.

Step Five: **Screening**

Bone density testing can be a fairly accurate measure of your risk for osteoporosis. This test, called a densitometry or DEXA scan, uses a particular type of x-ray to measure how many grams of calcium and other bone minerals are packed into a segment of bone.

To learn more, please visit the following websites

National Osteoporosis Foundation

<http://www.nof.org/osteoporosis/index.htm>

A National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Disease,

http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Bone/Osteoporosis/default.asp

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