

# Osteoporosis – Fact Sheet

Osteoporosis is a condition where bones lose minerals such as calcium which make the bones brittle and fragile as the bone density diminishes. It is found to affect more women than men with an estimated percentage of 13.2% of Australia's population expected to have this condition by 2021. Osteoporosis is often difficult to diagnose with the first sign often being a fracture which highlights that the condition is well established and been present for some time. Other symptoms include: stooped posture, Dowager's hump, loss of height, Kyphosis (spinal deformity) and a protruding abdomen.

## Risk Factors

- Age
- Alcohol
- Low body weight
- Decline in sex steroid hormones (i.e. menopause)
- Family and medical history
- Smoking
- Lack of movement
- Low calcium and vitamin D levels
- Poor digestive health

The long term problems associated with osteoporosis include; chronic pain, restricted movement, fractures, disability and a diminished quality of life.

The dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA scanning) measures bone mineral density and is the best way to diagnose osteoporosis. For women post menopause and men 55 years or older it is recommended that the DEXA scan is undertaken every 2 years unless bone loss has already started and yearly scans should be completed.

## Nutritional Recommendations

- Eat a 'wholefoods diet' with lots of quality protein from animal and vegetarian sources, fresh fruits and vegetables and quality fats to maximise the range of nutrients available. Eating seasonal is best for variety and local markets are great for this.
- Load up on antioxidants, especially vitamin C, magnesium and potassium rich fruits and vegetables to support acid-alkaline balance.
- Increase intake of Omega-3 fatty acids and essential fatty acids to aid inflammation, promote bone formation and regulate calcium levels in the body.
- Eat more calcium and magnesium rich foods with the majority coming from plant based foods.
- Eat prunes as they contain boron and potassium which are great for bone health and studies have shown that they have oestrogen like effects on the body.
- Eat foods rich in phytoestrogens as they are similar in structure to that of oestrogen and may improve bone health.
- Include garlic, onions and eggs into your diet as they contain sulfur, an important mineral for healthy bones.
- Add fresh turmeric and ginger to meals or drink in teas for their anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and analgesic properties.
- Avoid salt, sugar, soft drinks, caffeine, alcohol and excessive animal proteins as these foods promote increased calcium excretion in urine.
- Avoid saturated, trans or oxidised fats and processed foods as these foods have no nutritional value and promote inflammation in the body.

- Avoid yeast products as the high phosphorus content in yeast will compete with calcium uptake in the body.

## Other Suggestions

- Engage in exercise particularly weight bearing and resistant exercises to encourage bone strength and increase muscle mass. Yoga and Tai chi may also be beneficial for pain management, neuromuscular coordination and balancing as well as reducing fall frequency.
- Have some exposure to sunlight as vitamin D is essential for calcium absorption in the body.

The pain associated with osteoporosis can be debilitating and impair your ability to perform normal everyday tasks. Customised nutritional plans comprising of a specific food plan with the support of nutrient/herbal supplements can be very effective in the management of osteoporosis by reducing the inflammation and pain. If you require support please visit [www.good4younutrition.com.au](http://www.good4younutrition.com.au)