

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis means porous bone. It's a disease characterized by low bone mass and structural deterioration of bone tissue. This leads to bone fragility. It leads to an increased risk of fractures of the hip, spine, and wrist. Men as well as women are affected. It's a disease that can be prevented and treated. In the U.S., more than 53 million people either already have it or are at high risk. High risk is due to low bone mass.

Symptoms

It's often called a silent disease. This is because bone loss occurs without symptoms. People may not know that they have it at first. Not until their bones become so weak that a sudden strain, bump, or fall causes a hip to fracture or a vertebra to collapse. Collapsed vertebrae may initially be felt or seen in the form of severe back pain or loss of height. Or in spinal deformities such as kyphosis. This is severely stooped posture.

Screening

Following an assessment, your doctor may recommend that you have your bone mass measured. A bone mineral density (BMD) test may be done. It is a measure of your bone health. BMD tests can identify osteoporosis. They can determine your risk for fractures. They can measure your response to treatment. The most widely recognized BMD test is the central dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry. It is also known as a central DXA test. It's painless. It's a bit like having an x-ray. But with much less exposure to radiation. It can measure bone density at your hip and spine.

Treatment

A comprehensive treatment program includes a focus on proper nutrition and exercise. It also focuses on safety issues. This is to prevent falls that may result in fractures. Your doctor may prescribe meds to slow or stop bone loss, increase bone density, and reduce fracture risk.

Risk Factors

Certain risk factors are linked to the development. They contribute to an individual's likelihood of having the disease. Many people with it have many factors. But others have none.

- **Sex.** Your chances of developing it are greater if you are a woman. Women have less bone tissue. They lose bone faster than men because of the changes associated with menopause.
- **Age.** The older you are, the greater your risk.
- **Body size.** Small, thin-boned women are at greater risk.
- **Ethnicity.** White and Asian women are at highest risk.
- **Family history.** Fracture risk may be due to heredity. People whose parents have a history of fractures also seem to have reduced bone mass.
- **Hormones.** Abnormal absence of menstrual periods, low estrogen level, and low testosterone level in men can bring it on.