Osteoporosis is a disease that causes less dense, weak bones. This is due to the body breaking down bone tissue faster than it can create new tissue. Osteoporosis may go unnoticed until a fracture occurs, most commonly in the hip, wrist or spine – then it can be quite painful.

Women are 4 times more likely to get osteoporosis than men because women typically have less bone density and start to lose density at a younger age and faster rate.

Being a woman isn't the only risk factor of getting osteoporosis. Other high-risk factors include:
- Age 50 or older
- White or Asian women
- Post-menopause (lower levels of estrogen causes bone tissue to break down faster)
- Family history of bone fractures
- Small body frame
- Lack of physical activity
- Increased thyroid hormone
- Disordered eating that results in being underweight

1-3% of bone mass is loss each year after someone is over the age of 50. As we age, the following tests should be performed to detect osteoporosis:
- **Bone density test** (DEXA scan) shows the doctor how much x-ray light can be seen through your bones, which allows them to assess how dense your bones are.
- **Height measurements** each year to see if there is more than a ¾ inch loss of height.

We cannot stop getting older, but it is not too late to reduce our risk. If you are younger than 30, try increasing your bone mass to help slow the loss of bone mass. If you are older than 30, there are still ways to prevent osteoporosis:
- **Increase Calcium** to strengthen your bones. Eat more dark leafy greens, fish containing bones (canned salmon), soy products, and low-fat dairy.
- **Increase vitamin D** to help your body absorb calcium. Eat more egg yolks, fatty fish and fish oils or ask your doctor if you should take a vitamin D supplement.
- **Weight-bearing exercises** like jogging, walking or climbing stairs help build strong bones. Tai Chi is a low impact exercise that is also good for bone health.
- **Reduce alcohol and tobacco** use as it can increase loss of bone mass.

Curious about how your nutrition impacts your risk of osteoporosis? Try this Nutrient Calculator to see what nutrients are missing in your diet. By testing for osteoporosis as you age and maintaining good bone density by exercising and eating right, you can help avoid broken bones.

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