

What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis literally means “porous bone.” As we age, our bones naturally lose thickness and strength. Osteoporosis leads to an increased risk of fractures (breaks). Called the “silent crippler,” osteoporosis often progresses without symptoms or pain until a fracture occurs.

Osteoporosis is a major health threat for more than 28 million Americans (80 percent of whom are women). The disease is responsible for more than 1.5 million fractures each year.

Are you at risk?

Bone loss in women begins at about age 30 and accelerates after menopause. Women over the age of 50 have the greatest risk for developing osteoporosis, but the disease can strike at any age. It is important to remember that the disease is not limited to women. One in eight men over the age of 50 are at risk for developing osteoporosis. Other risk factors include:

- Family history of osteoporosis
- Being thin or “small-boned”
- Caucasian or Asian race (although African Americans and Hispanic Americans are at risk as well)
- Early menopause (before age 45) or surgically induced menopause
- Nulliparity (never having children)
- Amenorrhea in pre-menopausal women (absence of regular menstrual periods)
- Eating a diet low in calcium or Vitamin D
- Low testosterone levels in men
- Inactive lifestyle
- Excessive caffeine, protein, or sodium intake
- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol use
- Having certain diseases such as asthma, lung disease, intestinal problems, kidney problems, hormonal problems, kidney stones, liver disease, primary hyperparathyroidism, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, anorexia nervosa, or bulimia

- Being an organ transplant recipient
- Use of certain medicines such as corticosteroids and anticonvulsants

What can you do to prevent osteoporosis?

- Eat a balanced diet rich in calcium and Vitamin D.
- Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Who should get tested for osteoporosis?

An initial examination for osteoporosis is recommended at menopause if you have risk factors. This assessment will alert you to any problems and allow doctors to prescribe treatments to curb bone loss and monitor your progress as you grow older. All women over the age of 65 and men with risk factors should have a bone density test.

Dual energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA)

The most accurate test available for detecting osteoporosis and other bone diseases is dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA). This test, which takes about 10 to 15 minutes, measures the bone loss in your hips and spine. It also helps your doctor determine how quickly you are losing bone mass, as well as predict your risk of fracture. The test is also used to follow the course of the disease and monitor the effects of various treatments.

Before your DEXA test

You do not have to change your daily routine before this test. Eat, drink, and take your medicines you normally would. However, do not take calcium supplements (such as Tums) for 24 hours before your bone densitometry test.

During the test

You will be asked to lie on your back while the technologist performs the test. No needles or injections are involved. The DEXA procedure is similar to having a standard X-ray. The amount of radiation used is very small.

After the test

Generally, you can resume your usual activities immediately. Your test results will be provided to your doctor, who will discuss the results with you.

To schedule an appointment at Medina or Brunswick, call 330.721.5350 or toll free 866.721.5350.