

## **What Is Osteoporosis?**

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become weak and brittle. Many people don't know they have it until they break a bone from a small fall, or even just from sneezing. This condition affects millions of people, especially those over the age of 50. As we get older, our bones naturally start to lose density. For women, this happens more quickly after menopause, when estrogen levels drop. Men also lose bone strength over time, just at a slower rate. If your bones break down faster than they rebuild, osteoporosis develops.

## **Risk Factors**

Some things that increase your risk for osteoporosis are out of your control. These include getting older, being female, having a family history of the condition, or being of Caucasian or Asian background. But other risk factors are things you can do something about. Smoking, drinking too much alcohol, not eating well, and sitting around too much can all make your bones weaker. Low levels of calcium and vitamin D, both of which are needed for strong bones, are common in people with osteoporosis.

## **Warning Signs and Symptoms**

The tricky thing about osteoporosis is that it usually doesn't cause any symptoms in the early stages. That's why it's called a "silent disease." Over time, you may start to notice signs like getting shorter, having back pain, or your posture becoming hunched. If you start breaking bones easily, that's a big warning sign that you should get tested.

## **Testing and Diagnosis**

To find out if you have osteoporosis, your doctor will probably order a DEXA scan. This test measures how dense your bones are and gives a number called a T-score. A score above -1 is normal. A score between -1 and -2.5 means you have osteopenia, or low bone mass. A score below -2.5 means you have osteoporosis. If you're over 65 or have risk factors, it's a good idea to get this test.

## **Treatment Options**

There are several ways to treat osteoporosis. Some people take medications like bisphosphonates (such as Fosamax or Reclast) or newer drugs like Prolia or Evenity. These help to slow down bone loss or even rebuild bone. Others prefer natural options like calcium, vitamin D, magnesium, and vitamin K2 supplements. Collagen is another supplement that may help. No matter what, always talk

to your doctor before starting any new treatment.

## **Nutrition Tips**

Eating the right foods is one of the best things you can do for your bones. Leafy green vegetables, dairy products, nuts, seeds, and fish like salmon or sardines are all good choices. Foods that are high in calcium and vitamin D can help protect your bones. On the other hand, things like soda, caffeine, and salty processed foods can make things worse. Try to drink more water and avoid eating too much sugar or junk food.

## **Exercise Recommendations**

Exercise is also super important. When you use your muscles, your bones get stronger too. Activities like walking, dancing, lifting light weights, and doing yoga or tai chi can all help. These types of movement help improve your balance and make you less likely to fall. Avoid exercises that involve twisting or jumping if you already have weak bones, especially in your spine.

## **Healthy Habits**

Your daily habits make a big difference too. Smoking and heavy drinking are both harmful to your bones. Getting sunlight every day can help your body make vitamin D naturally. Also, make sure your home is safe-install grab bars, remove clutter, and use non-slip mats to help prevent falls. Keeping up with regular doctor visits is another way to stay ahead of the disease.

## **7-Step Action Plan**

If you're ready to take action, here's a simple 7-step plan. First, get a bone density test. Second, eat more bone-healthy foods. Third, exercise regularly. Fourth, cut back or quit smoking and drinking. Fifth, ask your doctor about medications or supplements. Sixth, make your home safer to avoid falls. And seventh, don't forget to follow up with your healthcare provider.

## **Need Help?**

At Island Rheumatology, we're here to help you every step of the way. If you want a personalized osteoporosis prevention or treatment plan, we invite you to schedule a consultation. Visit us online at <https://islandrheumatology.com> and take the first step toward stronger bones and a healthier future.