

# What Is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease that weakens the bones. Weakened bones are more likely to fracture (break). Osteoporosis affects men and women, but postmenopausal women are most at risk. To help prevent osteoporosis, you need to exercise and nourish your bones throughout your life.

## Childhood

The body builds the most bone during these years. That's why boys and girls need foods rich in calcium. They also need plenty of exercise. A healthy diet and exercise helps bones grow strong.

## Young Adulthood to Age 30

During young adulthood, bones become their strongest. This is called peak bone mass. The same habits that kept bones healthy in childhood help keep bone healthy in adulthood.

## Age 30 to Menopause

Bone mass declines slightly during these years. Your body makes just enough new bone to maintain peak bone mass. To keep your bones at their peak mass, be sure to exercise and get plenty of calcium.

## After Menopause

Menopause is when a woman stops having monthly periods. After menopause, the body makes less estrogen (female hormone). This increases bone loss. At this point, treatment may be needed to reduce risk of fracture. Exercise and calcium can also help keep your bones strong.

## Later in Life

In later years, both men and women need to take extra care of their bones. By this point, the body loses more bone than it makes. If too much bone is lost, you may be at risk for fractures. You can lessen bone loss by staying active and increasing your calcium intake. If you have osteoporosis, you can also learn ways to increase everyday safety.

