

Men, Women & Osteoporosis

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Osteoporosis is a disease that can affect both men and women. It occurs when more bone is broken down than is replaced. It may take men longer than women to lose enough bone to make them susceptible (due to bigger bones and more bone mass at skeletal maturity), but whenever it happens, osteoporosis can cause pain, height loss, a 'humped back,' disability and loss of independence for both sexes.

Bone mass usually peaks between 25 to 35 years of age for both sexes. After that, most women begin losing bone, especially after menopause. In the first 5 years of menopause, women can lose up to 1/3 of their bone mass due to lack of estrogen. Key factors for men in regard to bone health are the deficiency of testosterone and other androgens that can begin to fall after age 35.

Other risk factors for both sexes include:

- small stature/slender build
- lower than average body weight
- sedentary life style
- low calcium diet
- cigarette smoking
- gastric surgery
- long term use of medications, such as corticosteroids, thyroid hormone, anticonvulsants, heparin or chemotherapy
- heavy use of alcohol
- rheumatoid arthritis
- hyper/parathyroidism
- type-1 diabetes
- chronic liver or kidney disease

Fortunately, if bone loss is detected early through blood and bone density tests, its effects can be minimized or prevented.

So what can you do now? After you have been diagnosed with Osteoporosis or Osteopenia, consult with your doctor about scheduling an appointment with a Physical Therapist. Your therapist will design an exercise program that will be safe for your back. Walking is a good form of weight-bearing exercise and will likely be included early in your treatment, along with balance exercises and practical tips for activities of daily living. Weight bearing and resistance exercises may be added at the appropriate time as your program progresses.

Regular exercise will protect your bones against fracture. Exercise designed to increase muscle strength and flexibility, in addition to improving posture and body mechanics will help prevent falls.

Exercises you should avoid doing are forward bending activities that compress the spine, sit-ups or abdominal crunches, leg lifts, knee-to-chest movements and toe touches.

Talk to your doctor today about scheduling an evaluation with a **WPTI** therapist.