



Healthy Women

Presented by the Coalition of Labor Union Women

Osteoporosis (Bone Loss)

Osteoporosis is the loss of bone density which creates brittle and porous bones that fracture more easily. Eighty percent of those affected by osteoporosis are women. A woman's risk of osteoporosis increases after menopause because the loss of estrogen in a woman's system decreases calcium absorption.

Knowing your risk factors for osteoporosis and your options for prevention can reduce your risk of osteoporosis. Contact your health care provider to discuss bone density screening and other options for early detection and treatment.

The Facts

- Approximately 28 million Americans are at risk for osteoporosis, 80 percent of whom are women.
- Osteoporosis is the most common disease in women past menopause.
- Up to 50 percent of all bone mass may be attributed to decreased estrogen levels after menopause.
- A woman can lose up to one-third of her spinal bone mass during the first 6 years after menopause.
- The cost of diagnosing and treating osteoporosis is expected to reach \$62 billion in the year 2020.
- In the United States, at least 1.5 million fractures are associated with menopause each year.
- Forty percent of women over the age of 50 will develop an osteoporotic fracture.
- Compared to other osteoporotic fractures, hip fractures incur the greatest morbidity and direct costs for health services.
- Hip fractures are the single greatest reason for nursing home stays and accounted for 76.9 percent of nursing home stays in 1995.

The Risks

Modifiable → Smoking.

→ Low calcium diet, high consumption of caffeine, sodium or animal protein.

→ Inactivity (the bones need the pressure of at least two hours of standing and exercising each day).

Treatable → A major contributor to “natural” bone loss in women is estrogen depletion.

→ Certain medications that may contribute to bone loss such as thyroid hormones and some antiseizure medications.

Unmodifiable → Family history such as female relatives who become shorter in old age.

→ Slight, small-boned, fair-skinned women, particularly of Northern European or Asian descent.

→ Either a natural or artificial menopause before age 40.

The Options

✓ A good diet, plus a calcium supplement.

✓ A regular exercise routine which includes weight-bearing exercise.

✓ Estrogen and hormone replacement therapy (ERT/HRT) treat symptoms of menopause (hot flashes, etc.) and prevent some long-term health risks like osteoporosis, but may increase the risk of cancer. One-quarter of all postmenopausal women take estrogen. Only one in 10 women remains on therapy after one year.

✓ In addition, there are new options available to treat osteoporosis.

Partner with your health care provider. Act now to prevent serious illness later.

For additional copies, please contact the National CLUW Office
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