

Learning About Osteoporosis

More than 54 million Americans either have osteoporosis or are at high risk of developing it.

1 Introduction

Osteoporosis is a condition that decreases bone mass and strength. Although it most commonly affects older populations, osteoporosis can occur at any age. When comparing healthy bone to osteoporotic bone, the main difference is found in the naturally occurring spaces that exist inside the bone. In instances of osteoporosis, these gaps are much larger, therefore weakening the bone and putting it at a higher risk of break or fracture. Additionally, over time, the outer bone layer will become thinner and contribute to the frailty of the bone.

2 Signs and Symptoms

In many cases, people will not know they have osteoporosis until they sustain a bone-related injury (e.g. a fracture). However, at times, osteoporosis will present itself in its early stages with the following symptoms:

- Receding gums
- Weakened grip strength
- Weak and brittle nails

3 Risk Factors

Although the major risk for developing osteoporosis is aging, there are additional factors that may influence the likelihood of its onset, such as:

- Menopause
- Poor nutrition
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Physical inactivity
- Smoking/alcohol use
- Medical conditions (e.g. overactive thyroid, celiac disease)

4 Treatments

There are treatment options available for those with osteoporosis as well as preventative measures that can be taken proactively. Prescription medications for advanced osteoporosis include hormone therapy, bisphosphonates, biologics and anabolic agents. Preventative options, such as over the counter Vitamin D and calcium supplements, can be taken regularly to help combat bone decay. Additionally, lifestyle changes (e.g. increased physical activity, healthier diet, quitting smoking) can be made in efforts to promote bone health. While gradual bone deterioration is inevitable with age, these measures can be implemented to help delay the process.

Did you know?

Women are more likely than men to develop osteoporosis.

For more information on osteoporosis and supportive resources, please visit www.bones.nih.gov

References:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/osteoporosis>

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/4443-osteoporosis>