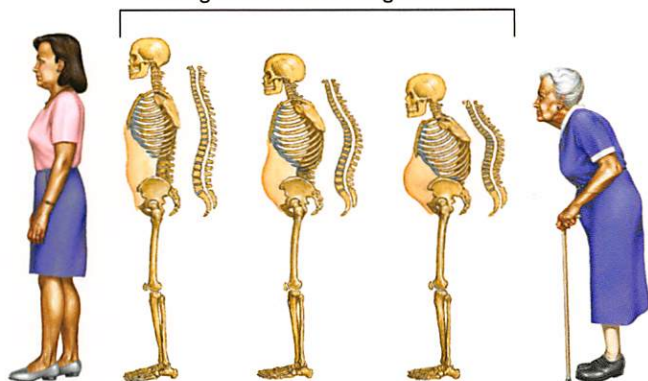


MANAGING YOUR OSTEOPOROSIS

A change in backbone strength over time

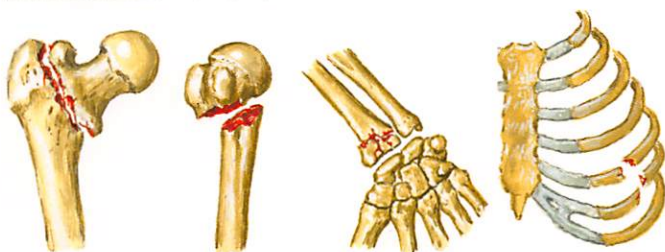


Osteoporosis is the thinning of the bones. Bones become fragile and loss of height is common as the back bones begin to collapse.

Women are at increased risk of osteoporosis after menopause. There is less estrogen to protect bone.



Low back and neck pain can be the first signs of osteoporosis.



Fractures of the hip, wrist, arm, and rib are common in people with osteoporosis.

What Is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is the continuing thinning and loss of density in bones (bone mass), which makes bones more brittle, fragile, and likely to break after minor trauma. Loss of height and back pain are common. Women are at special risk for osteoporosis after their menstrual periods end (menopause), because quicker bone loss occurs after reduced production of the hormone estrogen. Estrogen blocks a protein that weakens bones.

Osteoporosis is a silent disease, and it may not be evident until a bone breaks.

What Causes Osteoporosis?

Normal bone formation needs the minerals calcium and phosphate. If the body does not get enough calcium from the diet, bone production and bone tissues may suffer.

The main causes of osteoporosis include aging, which leads to a drop in estrogen in women at menopause and a drop in testosterone (a male hormone) in men. Other causes are being underweight, lifestyle habits (being sedentary or inactive), alcohol use, cigarette smoking, eating disorders, taking certain drugs, some chronic diseases, and long-term bed rest or immobilization.

What Are the Symptoms of Osteoporosis?

No symptoms may be obvious early in the disease, but in time, low back and neck pain, stooped posture, and gradual loss of height may be seen. In other cases the first sign is a fracture (ribs, wrists, or hips). Bones (vertebrae) in the spine may collapse (become flattened or compressed) and break, which is the most common fracture. Hip fractures can cause the greatest disability.