

# AMG HealthWise

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**FAMILY PRACTICE**

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## OSTEOPOROSIS PREVENTION

### What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a preventable condition that causes women's bones to become fragile and overly susceptible to fractures. The amount of bone mass a person develops is greatest, generally, between the ages of 30-35. After this, bone loss begins as a normal part of the aging process. For many women, particularly after menopause, this bone loss can be significant. For these women, their thinning or weakened bones are no longer strong enough to withstand everyday activity and fractures can occur.



### Am I at Risk of Developing Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis affects about half of all women in the U.S. over the age of 50. Several factors may increase your risk of developing this condition. Natural menopause and the removal of the ovaries typically reduces the estrogen

levels in your system. This hormonal change can greatly accelerate bone loss.

Heredity affects the amount of bone mass you have as well as your rate of bone loss as you age. Therefore, if you have a family history of broken bones in older relatives, you might be more at risk. Women who are small-boned or very slender start with less bone mass. They can afford to lose even less before osteoporosis occurs. Women of Asian or Northern European descent are also more at risk.

### Are There Risk Factors I can Control?

Yes. By eliminating those risk factors that are within your control, you can either prevent osteoporosis or live with it safely. Inactivity promotes bone loss. Exercise and physical activity can help build and maintain strong bones as well as prevent injury.

Calcium is an essential mineral for maintaining healthy, strong bones. If you are not consuming enough calcium,

CALCIUM CHART	
Women / Recommended Calcium Per Day*	
Between the ages 11-24 / 1200-1500 mg	
Pregnant or breast feeding / 1200-1500 mg	
Years 25 - menopause / 1000 mg	
After menopause / 1500 mg	

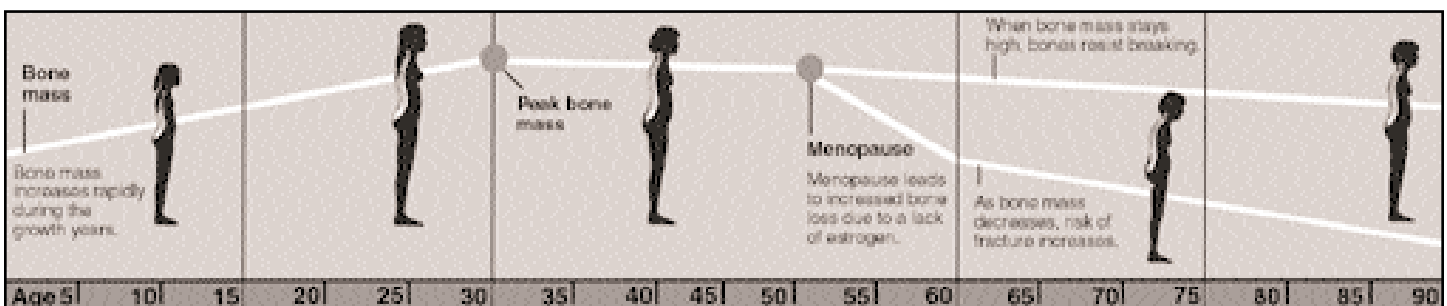


your body will break down bone cells to get the calcium it needs.

The best source of calcium is food, but if you can't get enough calcium from your diet, you may need to take calcium supplements. However, too much can be harmful. Salt and excess protein in your diet may increase the loss of calcium in urine. In addition, fiber may reduce calcium supplements and recommend the most appropriate one for you. Ask your doctor or healthcare provider if you have any question about your diet.

Women who smoke are more likely to develop osteoporosis than women who don't. Smoking may reduce peak bone mass, cause early menopause and interfere with hormone replacement therapy. Both alcohol and caffeine interfere with your body's use of calcium. Heavy drinking, by itself, can cause osteoporosis. In addition, people who drink alcohol in excess often have poor diets and get little exercise. Some drugs may increase the risk of osteoporosis. Ask your physician or healthcare provider about the medication you are taking.

*Continued on page 2...*



Osteoporosis Prevention, Continued from page 1...

### Can Osteoporosis Be Diagnosed?

Yes, but diagnosis can be difficult. X-rays can detect osteoporosis only after about 30% of your bone mass has already been lost. Other test, such as photon absorptionmetry and computed tomography, may be more accurate than standard X-rays for detecting bone loss and monitoring treatment.

A physical exam can help determine if you're at risk. Your doctor or healthcare provider will decide if more tests are necessary and can help you plan an effective prevention program.



### What Are The Warning Signs?

Osteoporosis is difficult to detect without medical tests because most warning signs don't occur until the disease is quite well-advanced. Some warnings are loss of height, sharp back pain, fractures (wrist, spine and hip) and curvature of the upper back. When spinal bones weaken from osteoporosis, the upper back may curve forward, forming a "dowager's hump". In addition, dental problems can provide warning signs. When bone loss occurs, the jawbone can shrink, causing teeth to loosen and dentures to fit poorly.

### Should I Consider Hormone Replacement Therapy?

A primary cause of osteoporosis in women is the loss of the sex hormone estrogen. For those women at risk of developing osteoporosis, hormone replacement therapy may be prescribed. As with most medical conditions the earlier treatment can begin after the onset of the condition, the more effective it will be. Therefore, early diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis is an important part of your overall health plan.

Your doctor or healthcare provider will explain the risks and benefits of this treatment and help you to determine whether hormone replacement therapy is the right treatment for you. If you both agree that hormone replacement is appropriate, your doctor will prescribe and supervise your program.

### What Are The Benefits of Hormone Replacement Therapy?

It slows or prevents postmenopausal bone loss, reduces risk of fractures, improves cholesterol levels and reduces the risk of heart disease. Replacement therapy can generally relieve other uncomfortable menopausal symptoms.

### What Are The Risks and Side Effects of Hormone Replacement Therapy?

It may cause slight breast tenderness and some fluid retention. Many women resume their monthly periods. However, hormone therapy does not affect fertility. In some cases, hormone replacement



may increase the risk of other diseases including high blood pressure. Because the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy are still being studied, you should consult with your healthcare provider to weight the benefits and risks in your particular case.

### Should I Exercise?

Weight-bearing exercise, walking, jogging, hiking, bicycling, tennis and golf are the best ways to fight off osteoporosis. Exercising for 20-60 minutes, 3-5 times each week will help maintain bone mass, muscle flexibility and improve motor skills which will help you to avoid falls.

You should consult your doctor or healthcare provider before starting any exercise program. Avoid over-exercising — this can cause menstrual irregularities and other problems.

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## ACCESSING YOUR RISK FOR OSTEOPOROSIS

### Weakened Bones Can Break

Bones that may be weakened from osteoporosis are more likely to break (fracture). The bones in your hip, wrist, and spine are at the greatest risk for breaking. Your upper back may curve if the bones in your spine fracture. You are at increased risk for osteoporosis if:

- You are postmenopausal (your body is no longer producing estrogen).
- There is not enough calcium or vitamin D in your diet.
- You smoke.
- You don't exercise much.
- You drink excessive amounts of alcohol.

If you already have osteoporosis, falls or excessive strain on your back can put you at risk for fractures.

### You Can Protect Yourself

You can protect yourself from the dangers of osteoporosis by taking these steps:

- Assess your risk factors.
- Learn how bones change over time.
- Make sure your diet has enough calcium and vitamin D.
- Get plenty of exercise.
- Ask your doctor about medications to treat osteoporosis.
- Prevent accidents by living safely.

To help prevent osteoporosis or live with it safely, you need to know what factors put you at risk. Answering the questions below can help you find your risk factors.

#### Heredity

- Do you older relatives tend to break bones?
- Are you thin or petite?
- Do you have fair skin?
- Are you Caucasian or Asian?
- Do any of your relatives have osteoporosis?

#### Hormones

- Have your ovaries been removed?
- Have you reached menopause?
- Did you have an early menopause?

#### Lifestyle

- Do you take many medicines?
- Do you smoke?
- Does your diet contain too much caffeine or too many foods high in protein?
- Do you drink excessive amounts of alcohol?

#### Physical Activity

- Are you physically inactive?
- Are your muscles weak?
- Do you rarely exercise?

#### Calcium

- Are you unsure how much calcium you should be getting every day?
- Do you avoid milk and dairy products?
- Did you avoid milk and dairy products when you were younger?

#### Signs of Osteoporosis

- Have you lost height over the years?
- Is your upper back curved forward?
- Have you ever fractured your wrist, spine, or hip?

#### Avoiding Injury with Osteoporosis

- Do you wear high-heeled shoes?
- Do you bend or lift improperly?
- Are there safety hazards, such as loose throw rugs, in your home?

### What Your Answers Mean

The more yes answers your have, the higher your risk are for osteoporosis. Discuss your risk factors with your doctor.

Osteoporosis Prevention, Continued from page 2...

### Early Diagnosis & Treatment

We are in a new era of preventing, detecting and treating this disease. In the past decade, bone density tests, painless diagnostic tests, have become available, in addition to several medications to prevent and treat this disease. Osteoporosis is highly preventable and treatable, especially if caught early, and people with risk factors should ask their doctor about a bone density test.

Bone Densitometry X-ray refers to a noninvasive method for measuring the level of bone mineral present in the skeleton. DEXA machines are becoming the most common method used to assess bone mass and is the demonstrated clinical tool for the assessment of osteoporosis. After positive assessment, there are now treatments available for the prevention of this bone thinning disease. Athens Medical Group is now offering this service to their patients. For more information regarding this new screening tool for bone density screening, ask your doctor.

Osteoporosis is recognized as an important public health problem because of the significant morbidity and mortality associated with its complications. As a result the bone densitometry procedure has become a method for screening individuals at risk for osteoporosis, used in diagnosing and treating the disease, and as a basis for recommending prevention strategies. Ask your doctor today about testing for bone loss.

## Bone Densitometry: A Fast, Simple Examination

Your bone densitometry examination may be the easiest medical examination you will have over the course of your life. Basically, all it involves is for you to lie back and let the bone densitometer do the work. However, there are always valid concerns about any medical procedure. For your peace of mind, this pamphlet addresses these important questions.



**Will it hurt?** Absolutely not. There is no pain at all associated with bone densitometry examination.

**Is the examination safe?** Bone densitometry involves an extremely small dose of radiation. How small? An AP spine scan delivers less than one-tenth the dosage of a chest x-ray. As in any medical procedure, if you are pregnant be sure to inform your physician.

**Is there special preparation involved?** Unlike many other medical examinations, no special preparation is required. There are no painful contrast injections, bad-tasting oral preparations or uncomfortable enemas.

**Do I have to alter my eating habits?** This is not an examination that requires you to have an empty stomach, drink a certain amount of water, or any other such pre-examination preparation on your part.

**What should I wear?** Wear any kind of clothing you like, but please avoid metal buttons or buckles.

**What do I do during the examination?** Lie still. Breathe normally. Rest comfortably.

**How long will the examination take?** Spine or femur measurements take approximately two to five minutes while total body measurements take approximately ten to fifteen minutes. Your physician will determine the examination that is best for you.

**What will the examination determine?** The bone densitometer will measure your bone mineral density (BMD). It will also compare your measurements to a reference population based on your age, weight, sex and ethnic background. This information will be used by your physician in making a diagnosis about your bone status and fracture risk.

## Lighten Up With a Laugh



A sense of humor is not only one of the best ways to enjoy life—but it may actually help make you healthier. To be sure, laughter can't cure a serious illness. But it couldn't hurt—and just might help, according to some recent studies. **Laughing helps release special chemicals from the brain**, which serve as natural painkillers in the body.

And when you laugh, you put your heart and lungs through a brisk mini-aerobic workout. How? While laughing, you breathe faster and deeper, which **raises the amount of oxygen in your circulation**, just like when you exercise.

But a good laugh does even more for you. It's a **great stress buster**. And it even provides some muscle conditioning. When you laugh heartily, your muscles tighten and relax, **easing tension**.

So try lightening up with some humor. A few fun examples: Rent a silly movie every now and then...Amuse the kids by taking turns imitating the family dog...Call an old friend who tells great jokes.

## AMG HealthWise

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**Athens Medical Group** would like to introduce you to the **AMG HealthWise** Newsletter. This publication is to advise you, our patient, of the latest news and information within our office. You can find it each month in our lobbies and in our patient rooms.

## Forming A Partnership With Your Doctor

Developing a good relationship with your physician is essential for your health.



This involves honesty in communicating pertinent information about your medical history, relevant aspects of your lifestyle and conditions that appear in your family health history. This information will allow your family doctor to maintain accurate, up-to-date records and formulate a proper treatment plan for you. The basis for good physician /patient communications is trust.

### Tips on Communicating

Getting the most out of your doctor visit requires some advance planning.

1. **Plan for your doctor's appointment.** Before going to the doctor, write down the two or three most important things that you want to discuss.
2. **Report your concerns.** Be honest with the doctor about your fears and concerns. For example, if you want to report something personal like a sexual problem, don't say that you're feeling "tired or run down."
3. **Exchange information and ask questions.** Fears about asking silly questions can sometimes prevent us from communicating effectively. Don't be afraid to ask enough questions to understand your condition fully.
4. **Participate in discussing treatment choices.** Since there is usually more than one way to treat a particular illness, it is important that you know the different choices available for you. Be sure to understand the benefits and risks of each option and find out how each treatment choice will affect you.
5. **Agree on the best plan for you.** Make sure you discuss those parts of the treatment that you think will be difficult to carry out. For example, taking medicine three times a day will meals may not work for you if you only eat two meals a day.
6. **Repeat your understanding of the plan.** Let the doctor confirm that you are on the right track.

## Scallop-Vegetable Stir-Fry

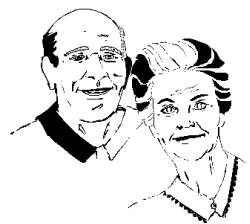


Try serving this stir-fry with Oriental bean thread noodles instead of rice. After cooking, the brittle, wire-thin strands become translucent. Look for bean thread noodles in the international foods section of most supermarkets or in Oriental foods stores.

- 3/4 cup canned low-sodium chicken broth, undiluted
- 1 1/2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 (6-ounce) package frozen snow pea pods, thawed
- 1/2 cup diagonally sliced green onions
- 1 tablespoon peeled, minced ginger
- 1/2 pound fresh bay scallops
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 1/4 cups diagonally sliced carrot

- 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame oil
- Vegetable cooking spray

1. Combine first 4 ingredients in a small bowl, stirring well. Set aside.
2. Coat a wok or nonstick skillet with cooking spray; drizzle vegetable oil around top of wok, coating sides. Heat at medium-high (375°) until hot. Add carrot; stir-fry 1 minute. Add mushrooms; stir-fry 1 minute. Add snow peas; stir-fry 1 minute. Remove vegetables from wok; set aside, and keep warm. Wipe drippings from wok with a paper towel.
3. Coat wok with cooking spray. Add green onions and ginger; stir-fry 30 seconds. Add scallops; stir-fry 1 to 2 minutes or until scallops are opaque. Add vegetables to wok; stir well. Pour broth mixture over vegetable mixture. Cook, stirring constantly, 1 minute or until slightly thickened and thoroughly heated. Yield: 2 servings.



## Elder Care

Your Parents Well-Being...

### THINGS TO NOTE

Many middle-aged adults are facing new decisions about how to care for their aging and increasingly dependent parents. Here are some things to note:

#### DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

How well are your parents doing with everyday activities such as bathing, grooming, shopping, eating, and walking?

#### SAFETY

Is your parents' home safe? Do they have all the things they need for mobility and comfort? Is there enough lighting?

#### MENTAL HEALTH

Are your parents happy and social, or withdrawn and depressed? Do they have trouble remembering important things? Is there any alcohol or prescription-drug abuse?

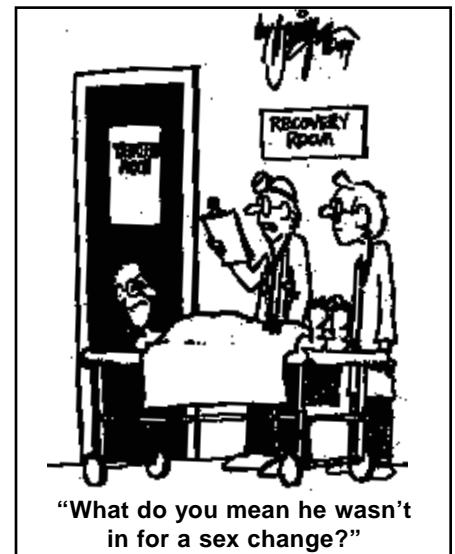
#### MEDICATION

Are your parents aware of the importance of taking their medication? Do they know how and when to take it? Does their primary care doctor know what other doctors have prescribed and why? Do your parents get regular checkups?

## Reflections



*You can inherit wealth but never wisdom. Wisdom, for most of us, is acquired in the thicket of experience. If we live long enough, wisdom usually meets us somewhere along the way. The trick is to get wise before you get old.*



**"What do you mean he wasn't in for a sex change?"**