

What affects bone health?

A number of factors can affect bone health. For example:

- **The amount of calcium in your diet.** A diet low in calcium contributes to diminished bone density, early bone loss and an increased risk of fractures.
- **Physical activity.** People who are physically inactive have a higher risk of osteoporosis than do their more-active counterparts.
- **Tobacco and alcohol use.** Research suggests that tobacco use contributes to weak bones. Similarly, regularly having more than two alcoholic drinks a day increases the risk of osteoporosis, possibly because alcohol can interfere with the body's ability to absorb calcium.
- **Gender.** You're at greater risk of osteoporosis if you're a woman, because women have less bone tissue than do men.
- **Size.** You're also at risk if you're extremely thin (with a body mass index of 19 or less) or have a small body frame because you might have less bone mass to draw from as you age.
- **Age.** Your bones become thinner and weaker as you age.
- **Race and family history.** You're at greatest risk of osteoporosis if you're white or of Asian descent. In addition, having a parent or sibling who has osteoporosis puts you at greater risk — especially if you also have a family history of fractures.
- **Hormone levels.** Too much thyroid hormone can cause bone loss. In women, bone loss increases dramatically at menopause due to dropping estrogen levels. Prolonged absence of menstruation (amenorrhea) before menopause also increases the risk of osteoporosis. In men, low testosterone levels can cause a loss of bone mass.
- **Eating disorders and other conditions.** People who have anorexia or bulimia are at risk of bone loss. In addition, stomach surgery (gastrectomy), weight-loss surgery and conditions such as Crohn's disease, celiac disease and Cushing's disease can affect your body's ability to absorb calcium.
- **Certain medications.** Long-term use of corticosteroid medications, such as prednisone, cortisone, prednisolone and dexamethasone, are damaging to bone. Other drugs that might increase the risk of osteoporosis include aromatase inhibitors to treat breast cancer, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, methotrexate, some anti-seizure medications, such as phenytoin (Dilantin) and phenobarbital, and proton pump inhibitors, and some blood pressure medications.

OKLAHOMA SPINE & BRAIN INSTITUTE

6802 South Olympia Ave, Suite 300, Tulsa, OK 74132 Office: (918) 749-0762 Fax: (918) 744-4246

What can you do to keep your bones healthy?

You can take a few simple steps to prevent or slow bone loss. For example:

- **Include plenty of calcium in your diet.** For adults ages 19 to 50 and men ages 51 to 70, the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) is 1,000 milligrams (mg) of calcium a day. The recommendation increases to 1,200 mg a day for women after age 50 and for men after age 70.

Good sources of calcium include dairy products, almonds, broccoli, kale, canned salmon with bones, sardines and soy products, such as tofu. If you find it difficult to get enough calcium from your diet, ask your doctor about supplements.

- **Pay attention to vitamin D.** Your body needs vitamin D to absorb calcium. For adults ages 19 to 70, the RDA of vitamin D is 600 international units (IUs) a day. The recommendation increases to 800 IUs a day for adults age 71 and older.

Good sources of vitamin D include oily fish, such as tuna and sardines, egg yolks, and fortified milk. Sunlight also contributes to the body's production of vitamin D. If you're worried about getting enough vitamin D, ask your doctor about supplements.

- **Include physical activity in your daily routine.** Weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, jogging, tennis and climbing stairs, can help you build strong bones and slow bone loss.
- **Avoid substance abuse.** Don't smoke. Avoid drinking more than two alcoholic drinks a day.