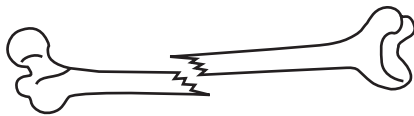


# WEAK BONES

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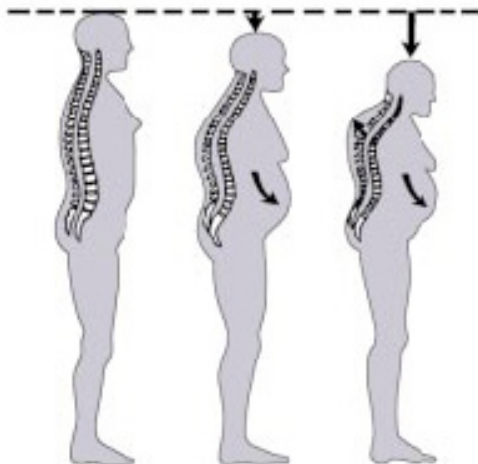
## What are weak bones?

Weak bones, or osteoporosis, happen when the bones in the body are weak and can break easily. Weak bones happen when the amount of bone loss in the body is larger than the amount of bone gain. Bones can get weak slowly over time. Often a person does not know they have weak bones until a bone breaks.



## What are the signs of weak bones?

Because of mineral loss, osteoporosis can cause progressive breaks in a person's back. This causes a person to lose height and get shorter and shorter. This spinal compression causes a gradual decrease in height due to forward bending of the upper spine. This eventually results in a painful, stooped back, commonly referred to as a "dowager's hump." Loss of height can also result in a "pot belly" or a prominent abdomen even with no increase in weight.



## What are the risk factors for weak bones?

- Being a woman
- Being White or Asian
- Being older in age
- Being thin
- Lack of exercise
- Having a family history of broken bones
- Some drugs, smoking
- History of poor eating (low calcium intake)
- Early menopause (before age 45 years)

## What is so bad about weak bones?

When you have weak bones, simple things like sneezing, bending, and stepping can cause a bone to break. Broken bones can lead to:

- Disability
- Death

## How do you know if you have weak bones?

1. Tools that measure the amount of bone you have (bone density) can tell a person if they have weak bones.
2. A doctor can look at your risk factors for weak bones and measure how strong your bones are.
3. If you have weak bones, your doctor may give you special pills or medicine.

## What foods should I eat for strong bones?

- 3 to 4 servings of low-fat milk and foods made from low-fat milk like cheese and yogurt
- A mix of fruits, vegetables, bread, and low-fat meats, fish, and chicken.

These foods will give your bones all the vitamins, minerals, and protein they need to be strong.



## Foods with Calcium

- Milk
- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Almonds
- Broccoli
- Ice cream
- Juices with added calcium
- Tofu with added calcium
- Breads with added calcium
- Cereals with added calcium
- Dark-green, leafy vegetables



**Tip:** Choose low-fat milk, yogurt, ice cream, and cheese.

## What about calcium and vitamin D pills (supplements)?

- Calcium and vitamin D pills (supplements) are helpful for treating weak bones.
- Choose a pill with 500 milligrams (mg) or less of calcium.
- Take a calcium carbonate pill like *Oscal®*, *Tums®*, or *Caltrate®*, **with** food.
- Take a calcium citrate pill like *Citrical®* **without** food.

## How much calcium do I need each day?

DIETARY REFERENCE INTAKES OF CALCIUM	
AGE (years)	MILLIGRAM (mg)/DAY
4 - 8	1,000 mg
9 - 18	1,300 mg
19 - 50	1,000 mg
Males 51 - 70	1,000 mg
Females 51 -70	1,200 mg
> 70 years old	1,200 mg

Source: Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Science, 2011.

## Bottom Line

If you have weak bones:

- Eat foods with calcium
- Get vitamin D from foods and the sun
- Exercise
- Talk to your doctor



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