

Wellness by the Month

Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition in which your bones are weak and therefore more likely to break. The most frequently affected are the bones of the hip, spine and wrist. There are no symptoms. It is estimated that 10 million Americans currently have osteoporosis. Although people at any age can become affected by osteoporosis, women, particularly older women, are at the highest risk. It is estimated that one of every two women and one of every four men will break a bone as a result of osteoporosis at some point in their lives.

What Causes Osteoporosis?

There are risk factors for osteoporosis. Some risks are genetic and others are lifestyle related. Those risk factors include:

- Gender – Eighty percent of those affected are women.
- Body size - Women who are small and thin are at a higher risk.
- Age - The older a person is, the greater their risk.
- Family history - Osteoporosis is a disease that is commonly found to run in families.
- Ethnicity – White and Asian women have increased risk.
- Low estrogen levels in women.
- A diet low in calcium and vitamin D.
- The use of certain medications.
- Lack of physical activity.

The National Osteoporosis Foundation Five Steps to Bone Health and Osteoporosis Prevention:

- Get your daily recommended amounts of calcium and vitamin D
- Engage in regular weight-bearing exercise
- Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol
- Talk to your healthcare provider about bone health
- When appropriate, have a bone density test and take medication