

***NORTH PROVIDENCE PRIMARY CARE ASSOC. INC.
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INTERNAL MEDICINE***

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis can be defined as a loss of bone mass, which can subject an individual to fracture of the bone, which ordinarily would not occur if the bone were present with its full complement of mineral. It has been known to affect 20 million Americans and is the cause of 1.5 million fractures a year. Other affects of this condition are loss of heigh and formation of a dowager's hump (hunched back). Certain individuals, are at a greater risk of developing osteoporosis, are those of white or Asian descent, or of families who have had osteoporosis,. People, who are inactive or indulge in smoking, alcohol use, or have poor dietary intake of calcium are also at risk.

Most commonly, osteoporosis has been know to affect primarily postmenopausal women (15-20 years after menopause), as well as men 70 years of age or older. Peak bone mass is achieved by the fourth decade of life and then steadily decreases throughout life. In women, especially this decrease id quickest in the first 7 years after menopause resulting in a bone loss of 2-5% per year.

Treatment of osteoporosis can include: adequate calcium (1200-1500mg/day) and Vitamin D, avoidance of smoking and heavy alcohol consumption and regular erceise. Putting this in perspective, 1 cup of milk has only 290mg of calcium. Luckily, there are supplements.

Testing for osteoporosis is available through you primary care doctor and is recommended if the patient meets the above risk factors. Bone mass can nobe be measured very simply, accurately and painlessly through a device called a DEXA Scan (Xray device) usually in 10 minutes.

Written by Dr. Anthony G. Farina Jr.