

Osteoporosis

TERMINOLOGY (SYNONYMS)

- Osteopenia
- Thinning of bone

INTRODUCTION

Osteoporosis means "porous bones". It is a disease that thins and weakens the bones to the point that they become fragile and break easily. Women and men with osteoporosis most often break bones in the hip, spine, and wrist. You can't "catch" osteoporosis or give it to someone else. It is a skeletal disorder characterized by compromised bone strength predisposing to an increased risk of fracture. Bone strength reflects the integration of two main features: bone density and bone quality. Osteoporosis is the most common of the bone diseases that affect Americans. Although it is the underlying cause of most fractures in older people, the condition is silent and undetected in many cases until a fracture occurs.

PREVALENCE

Osteoporosis is a major health risk for 28 million Americans. In the United States today, 10 million individuals already have osteoporosis and 18 million more have low bone mass, placing them at increased risk for this disease. American women are four times more likely to develop osteoporosis than men. One out of every two women and one in eight men over 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in her or his lifetime.

Osteoporosis is responsible for more than 1.5 million fractures annually, including 300,000 hip fractures, approximately 700,000 vertebral (spinal) fractures, 250,000 wrist fractures, and more than 300,000 fractures at other sites. In the presence of osteoporosis, fractures can occur from normal lifting and bending, as well as from falls. Furthermore, osteoporotic fractures, particularly vertebral fractures, can be associated with disabling pain.