

## Osteoporosis

Around 3.5 million people in the UK have osteoporosis, and it is more common in women than men. It affects one in two women and one in five men over the age of 50, although it can affect people of all ages.

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### What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition where the bones become weak, fragile and can break easily. Osteoporosis can be caused by:

- early menopause (before the age of 45 – see our section on [Menopause](#) for more information)
  - post menopause through lack of oestrogen which protects the bones
  - steroid therapy
  - rheumatoid [arthritis](#)
  - calcium and vitamin D deficiency
  - low levels of testosterone in men
  - early hysterectomy (before the age of 45)
  - common family history
  - long term immobility
  - smoking
  - over 3 units of alcohol every day
  - a range of medication for cancer or thyroid treatments
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### Ways to help prevent osteoporosis

There are several ways to keep your bones healthy and reduce your chances of developing osteoporosis:

- **diet** eating and drinking foods rich in calcium and vitamin D, such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, baked beans, dried fruit and green, leafy vegetables. Studies include taking probiotics with *Lactobaccillus reuteri* 6475
- **exercise** regular, weight-bearing exercise such as jogging, aerobics, tennis, dancing and brisk walking can help to improve bone strength. Strengthen your core muscles to prevent falls through pilates, yoga or tai chi
- **Lifestyle** smoking and drinking alcohol increase the risk of osteoporosis as they have a toxic effect on bones. Stop smoking and drink alcohol in moderation. See the article on [Giving up smoking](#) for advice.

- **Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)** HRT can be very helpful in preventing osteoporosis. Speak to your GP for further advice.

[Royal Osteoporosis Society](#) has produced a wide range of [information sheets and leaflets](#) on various issues about osteoporosis, which you should find helpful. They can also give you details of a support group in your local area.

[Healthtalk.org](#) has information and videos with real life experiences.

You may find it useful to read our [Falls Prevention](#) article on Information NOW.

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## Symptoms

There are warning signs that you have some issues with your bones which include:

- losing 4 cm in height
- curvature of the spine
- low impact fracture/s that also take a while to heal
- taking medications long term, such as steroids or anti epileptic drugs.

In all these cases, contact your GP surgery.

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## Treatments

Although a diagnosis of osteoporosis is based on the results of your [bone density scan](#), the decision about what treatment you need is individual to you. Medications include:

- Bisphosphonates
  - Selective oestrogen receptor modulators (SERMs)
  - Parathyroid hormone
  - Calcium and vitamin D supplements
  - HRT (hormone replacement therapy)
  - Testosterone treatment
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## Other useful Information

[NHS.UK](#) has a section on Osteoporosis

Royal College of Physicians [Strong bones after 50: fracture liaison services](#)

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## Other Useful Organisations

- [Newcastle and District Osteoporosis Support Group](#) have several meetings annually and meet online or at Brunswick Church (see ROS website)

- [Healthtalk.org](https://www.healthtalk.org)
- [NHS 111](https://www.nhs.uk/111) is the new telephone service which has replaced NHS Direct. You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time.
- [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk) is a website providing health and medical advice, an online symptom checker and a facility for searching for services near you.
- [National Institute of Clinical Excellence \(NICE\)](https://www.nice.org.uk) has produced [guidance](#) for those diagnosed with osteoporosis including after a [fracture](#).

**Please note** – The content on this website is provided for general information only, and should not be treated as a substitute for the medical advice of your own doctor or any other health care professional. If you are feeling unwell, make an appointment to see your GP or contact [NHS 111](https://www.nhs.uk/111). In an emergency, dial **999**.

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## Useful Organisations

### Royal Osteoporosis Society

**Email:** [info@theros.org.uk](mailto:info@theros.org.uk)

**Website:** <https://theros.org.uk>

**Telephone:** 01761 471 771

**Address:** Manor Farm, BA2 0PJ

### NHS 111

**Website:** [www.nhs.uk/111](https://www.nhs.uk/111)

**Telephone:** 01761 471 771

### NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

**Email:** [nice@nice.org.uk](mailto:nice@nice.org.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.nice.org.uk/>

**Telephone:** 0300 323 0140

### healthtalk.org

**Email:** [info@healthtalkonline.org](mailto:info@healthtalkonline.org)

**Website:** [www.healthtalk.org](http://www.healthtalk.org)

**Telephone:** 0300 323 0140

## NHS

**Website:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Telephone:** 0300 323 0140

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## Related Articles

[Falls prevention](#)

[10 Tips for good health](#)

[Menopause](#)