

Let's talk about the 'Silent Disease'



Osteoporosis is a condition that causes bones to become thin, fragile, and more prone to fractures. Osteoporotic bones can break following relatively minor impact – for example, a fall from standing height or a bump. The most common sites of a fracture due to osteoporosis are the wrist, spine, shoulder and hip. Healthcare professionals may refer to these broken bones as ‘fragility fractures’ or ‘osteoporotic fractures’ – these two terms mean the same thing.

Osteoporotic bone can occur for a number of reasons. These include age, medicines and other conditions.

- **Age:** As we age, the protective effect of our hormones reduces, and our skeleton rebuilds at a slower rate than it is removed.
- **Medicines:** Some medicines have a critical role in managing other diseases, but unfortunately have a negative effect on bone health. These include medicines used to treat rheumatoid arthritis, breast cancer, and HIV.
- **Other conditions:** Past or current eating disorders, premature menopause, malabsorption issues, coeliac disease, excess alcohol use and smoking are all associated with an increased risk of osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is often called the ‘silent disease’, because there are no external symptoms. It’s also a very common condition. One in three women and one in five men aged over 50 will suffer an osteoporotic fracture – and after one fracture has occurred, the risk of having another doubles. In addition to being very painful, osteoporotic fractures often result in long-term disability and loss of independence for older adults. They can even cause premature death.

Therefore, it’s essential that osteoporosis is diagnosed and treated as early as possible. If you’re over 50 and have broken a bone after a minor fall or bump, or you are concerned that you have risk factors please complete the Know Your Bones tool and talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about a bone health assessment.