



Invest in Your Bones **Osteoporosis—The Silent Disease** **Leaflet 2**

Osteoporosis, a painful and disfiguring disease, weakens bones and makes them break or fracture easily. Some 1.9 million Texans have low bone mass, resulting in 80,000 fractures of hips, wrists, and vertebrae annually (Texas Department of State Health Services, 2008). Osteoporosis is preventable and/or treatable. Accordingly, osteoporosis occurs when bone formation is inadequate, bone removal is excessive, or a combination of the two. Fractures occur most often in the hip, spine, and wrist. Spinal fractures cause a stooped posture, loss of height, and chronic back pain. Hip fracture, the most serious consequence of osteoporosis, threatens one's independence and life.

So what are the bone health robbers that accelerate bone loss?

calcium deficiency	family history	aging	excessive alcohol
lack of exercise	being underweight	loss of estrogen	
caffeine	being female	smoking	

What are some important steps that need to be taken by all of us to protect our bones?

- Eat a balanced diet rich in calcium foods—milk foods; deep green, leafy vegetables; and some canned fish products.
- Estrogen replacement therapy is recommended for women during menopause.
- A regular program of exercise and, in some cases, medication may slow bone loss.
- Fall-proofing the home and changing one's lifestyle to avoid fracturing fragile bones is recommended.

Are you at risk of developing the disease? You may be at risk if you:

- drink less than 2 servings of milk or eat other calcium-containing foods daily,
- drink alcohol in excessive amounts or smoke,
- don't exercise at least 30 or more minutes daily, or
- have a family history of osteoporosis.

Bone Density Testing

Osteoporosis may go undetected for decades until a fracture occurs, so early diagnosis is important. A bone mass measurement allows physicians to identify areas in the body with low bone mass to determine the type of medication or therapy to be used to prevent further bone loss. Safe, accurate, and noninvasive tests are available for measuring bone mass. Ask your doctor if you need a bone density test – the the most practical way to accurately measure your current level of bone density and predict risks of future bone breaks. Call the [National Osteoporosis Foundation](http://www.nof.org/prevention/calcium2.htm) at (800) 223-9994, or see their website <http://www.nof.org/prevention/calcium2.htm> for additional information about your investment in your bones and where to locate bone density testing in your area.

For additional information, contact your local county AgriLife Extension agent – Family and Consumer Sciences. Resources: Mary Kinney Bielamowicz, Ph.D., R.D., L.D., Regents Fellow, Professor & Extension Nutrition Specialist; and Sharon Francey Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., Associate Professor & Extension Nutrition Specialist; Nutrition & Food Science Department, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M System, College Station, Texas.