
Arthritis and Bone Health

Having arthritis puts you at higher risk for osteoporosis. You can start today to help minimize or slow down getting osteoporosis. Work with your health care provider to find the tools that best work for you.

What is arthritis? What is osteoporosis? How do they affect each other?

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become thin and weak, and more likely to break.

- The most common bones to break as a result of osteoporosis are the spine, wrist, or hip.
- Osteoporosis is often called a “silent disease” because you can’t feel or see your bones getting thinner. Many people do not even know that they have osteoporosis until a bone breaks.
- People with osteoporosis most often break bones as a result of a simple fall.
- A broken bone can interfere with your daily activities and have serious consequences.

See the New York State Department of Health’s Osteoporosis Fact Sheet:

www.health.ny.gov/publications/2047.pdf

Arthritis refers to more than 100 conditions (such as osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis) that affect the joints, the surrounding tissue, and other connective tissue.

- Symptoms of arthritis include pain, swelling, stiffness and aching in and around the joint.
- One of the leading causes of disability in NYS, arthritis often occurs with other diseases.
- Regular, moderate physical activity can reduce pain and improve balance, function, mood, and quality of life for adults with arthritis.

See the New York State Department of Health’s Arthritis Fact Sheet:

<http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/8556.pdf>

I have rheumatoid arthritis. How does that impact the risk for osteoporosis?

- People with rheumatoid arthritis are more likely to get osteoporosis than people with osteoarthritis.
- People with rheumatoid arthritis may have lower bone mass. That’s because the diseased joints affect the other bones and cause bone breakdown.
- Certain medications (such as long-term steroid medication or methotrexate) used to treat rheumatoid arthritis can cause bone loss.
- Limitations in physical activity – often associated with any form of arthritis - may increase bone loss and the risk for osteoporosis.

Promote bone health and help your arthritis:

- Eat a varied, nutrient-rich diet that includes a lot of fruits and vegetables.
- Choose foods to get the calcium you need (1000-1200 mg each day). Only add a calcium supplement if needed.
- Consume 600-800 IU or 15-20 mcg of vitamin D each day from food (and from supplements, if needed).
- Be physically active every day as much as you can.
- Choose exercise programs that emphasize moderate activity, such as walking, as well as stretching and strengthening exercises that improve posture and range of motion. Speak to your healthcare provider about what exercise is best for you.
- Do not smoke. Quit if you do.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.
- Take safety precautions to prevent falls.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need a bone density test.

For more information about arthritis in New York State, visit the NYSDOH website:

www.health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/arthritis/
or call the NYS Arthritis Program at 518-408-5142.

For more information about osteoporosis in New York State, visit www.NYSOPEP.org

or the NYSDOH website: www.health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/osteoporosis/
or call the Resource Center at 845-786-4772.