

SPEAKING OF... OSTEOPOROSIS (WEAK BONES)

Osteoporosis is a silent disease where the bones get weak. Millions of people, mostly older women, have weak bones and don't even know it. Weak bones can lead to broken bones. The hip bone, wrist bones and back bones are the most often to break when bones are weak. A broken bone in the hip, wrist or back is not always caused by an accident. It might be because the bones are weak.

Could you have Weak Bones? A woman who is 50 years or older has a 50% chance of having this disease. If there is a fall or a broken bone, there is a greater chance for another fall and broken bone, only worse. A badly broken bone can make it hard to move and walk. There could be a lot of pain. This could mean a nursing home or long-term care stay. It could cost a lot of money for someone who cannot take care of herself because of weak bones.

How Does This Happen? The older we get, the higher the chance for weak bones disease. More women get weak bones than men. This is because there are hormone changes in women that happen after menopause. Also, women have smaller bones than men and lose bone faster than men do. Having a close family member who has this disease or has broken a bone may also increase your chances of getting osteoporosis (weak bones)

What are the Symptoms? Many people have weak bones and don't even know it. Bone loss can happen over a long period of time, and it doesn't hurt. For many people, a broken bone is the first sign that they have this disease. Talk to your doctor about your bone health. He or she may order a bone density test. This test is safe and does not cause pain. It measures how strong your bones are and whether you have this bone disease. It can also tell what your chances are of breaking a bone.

Speaking Of... is a free education series from the National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses (NAON) about medical conditions of the bones and joints, in plain language

