

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is the commonest bone disease in the world, even though it is preventable and treatable in the majority of people. Unlike other diseases there are **NO** signs or symptoms prior to a fracture. It is known as “The Silent Killer”, as only 15% of people are diagnosed. One of the major misconceptions is that if a person leads a healthy lifestyle they will not develop osteoporosis. This is not the case.

Many people think that osteoporosis only affects older women, and the only cause is the menopause, (there are over 60 causes) however this is not the case. 1 in 5 men and 1 in 2 women over 50 will break bones due to osteoporosis, but it also affects all age groups including children. €402 million was spent in 2010, just on falls and fractures in older people. Undiagnosed osteoporosis is one of the major causes of loss of independence in older people.



These are not actors

The male on the far right of the poster is an Olympic and World (multiple) rifle shooting champion, who has reversed his bones back to normal. The youngest person in the poster on the left at 19 was diagnosed with the bones of an 84 year old. It took three years but she has returned her bones to normal. Osteoporosis is reversible in certain cases, however early detection is essential.

Signs and Symptoms of possible undiagnosed osteoporosis

- **Fractures (broken bones) due to low trauma:** Any adult who breaks a bone from a trip and fall or less, even if it was on ice or cement.
- **Loss in height:** 2-16cm - It is not normal **at any age** to lose height, it is a red flag if a person has lost more than 2 cm in height, the person should be checked for Osteoporosis.
- **Sudden episodes of upper, middle or low back pain:** Osteoporosis should be ruled out if a person has undiagnosed back pain, especially if the person has lost height or developed a hump on their back.
- **A hump developing** on a person's upper back is a red flag that the person should get a DXA scan. If it is osteoporosis, the bones in the spine are fracturing and will continue to fracture unless treatment is initiated.
- **Change in body shape or size** - Usually associated with loss of height. This can happen due to the vertebra collapsing, followed by the rib cage ending up resting on the pelvis because the spine has lost bone support to hold it upright. A pot belly can then occur as there is no place for the stomach contents to go, other than outwards. This can cause severe pain, difficulty in breathing and swallowing, in severe undiagnosed Osteoporosis patients.

Osteoporosis Facts:

- 20% of Irish people aged 60+ who fracture a hip will die within 6-12 months. People die from the secondary effects of a hip fracture, which are usually due to the person not being mobile. These effects are: a blood clot, pneumonia or infection.
- 50% of Irish people aged 60+ who fracture a hip will not be able to wash, bath or walk across a room unaided.
- Only 30% of Irish people aged 60+ who fracture a hip regain their independence.
- **50% of women with broken bones in their spine, go undiagnosed.**
- 90% of hip fractures are due to osteoporosis but only approximately **15% of people with osteoporosis are diagnosed.**
- **One hip fracture costs €55,000 but a DXA scan to check for osteoporosis costs approximately €100.**

Further Information

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