

OSTEOPOROSIS

Osteoporosis is a condition characterized by a decrease in the density of bone, decreasing its strength and resulting in fragile bones. Osteoporosis literally leads to abnormally porous bone that is compressible, like a sponge. This disorder of the skeleton weakens the bone and results in frequent fractures (breaks) in the bones. Osteopenia is a condition of bone that is slightly less dense than normal bone but not to the degree of bone in osteoporosis.

Normal bone is composed of protein, collagen, and calcium, all of which give bone its strength. Bones that are affected by osteoporosis can break (fracture) with relatively minor injury that normally would not cause a bone to fracture. The fracture can be either in the form of cracking (as in a hip fracture) or collapsing (as in a compression fracture of the vertebrae of the spine). The spine, hips, ribs, and wrists are common areas of bone fractures from osteoporosis although osteoporosis-related fractures can occur in almost any skeletal bone.

For additional information, visit National Osteoporosis Foundation at <http://www.nof.org/>

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