



# Bone Disease

**80%** of those living with osteoporosis in Canada are women.<sup>1</sup>

**2x** Women are twice as likely to fracture their hip compared to men.<sup>1</sup>

**1 in 4** Canadian women are living with osteoarthritis.<sup>2</sup>

## Bone disease in women

Both osteoporosis and osteoarthritis are more common in women; women are 4x more likely to develop osteoporosis<sup>1</sup> and nearly 2x more likely to develop osteoarthritis than men.<sup>2</sup> Current research suggests this discrepancy is explained by estrogen's vital role in bone health.

## Importance of estrogen

Estrogen plays an important role in maintaining bone health. Hormonal signaling from estrogen helps activate your body's bone repair process which is essential in maintaining a healthy bone density. After menopause, low estrogen levels disrupt this delicate reparative process leading to a decreased bone density. In fact, up to 1 in 2 women will break a bone due to osteoporosis – equal risk to breast, ovarian and uterine cancer combined.<sup>1</sup>

While the link between estrogen deficiency and osteoporosis is more well established in the research, it's still not entirely clear how estrogen may play a role in protecting against osteoarthritis. Research suggests that estrogen may play help protect against joint inflammation and cartilage damage, but further studies are needed to confirm this theory.

## What is bone disease?

Bone disease encompasses a wide range of health conditions affecting your bones and joints. The two most common forms of bone disease are osteoporosis and osteoarthritis.

While these conditions may sound very similar, each affects different parts of the musculoskeletal system.

Osteoporosis is a bone disease characterized by reduced bone density and increased risk of fractures, while osteoarthritis is a joint disorder involving the breakdown of protective cartilage that covers your joints.

Your body is constantly repairing and re-building your bones at a microscopic level. Your joints rely on this reparative process to maintain healthy function.

Both osteoarthritis and osteoporosis occur when your body is unable to keep up with this repair process leading to a breakdown of protective joint cartilage and underlying bone respectively.

**Up to 1 in 2 women will break a bone due to osteoporosis.<sup>1</sup>**

# Osteoporosis

## Symptoms

Known as a silent disease, osteoporosis often does not cause any symptoms until you break a bone, usually secondary to a minor fall.

## Diagnosis

A bone density test (DEXA Scan) involves a special x-ray machine and may be recommended by your doctor depending on your age and risk factors.

## Treatment

There are different prescription medications used in the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis depending on the results of your scan and associated risk factors. It's also important to maintain adequate levels of vitamin D and calcium either through diet or supplementation.

# Osteoarthritis

## Symptoms

Osteoarthritis symptoms tend to progress over a period of months or years as the joint damage accumulates. Symptoms may come and go in the early stages and eventually progress to more constant debilitating pain.

- Joint pain worse when using the joint and improving with rest.
- Joint stiffness worse when you wake up or after not moving for a while.
- Joint swelling due to a build-up of inflammatory fluid or an outgrowth of bone.
- Joint dysfunction such as instability, grinding or creaking when moving.

## Diagnosis

Diagnosis of osteoarthritis can be made based on symptoms and physical examination of the affected joint(s). X-ray or MRI is not usually included in the diagnostic process unless you are not responding to treatment or are in preparation for surgery.

## Treatment

Treatment for osteoarthritis centres around severity, symptom management and quality of life. Most individuals with osteoarthritis will be recommended a combination of physiotherapy and medication. There are many different types of medications for osteoarthritis from topical creams, to pills and injections focused on reducing pain and inflammation.

For more severe cases of osteoarthritis, where quality of life has been significantly impacted by symptoms, surgical procedures, such as hip and knee replacements, may be recommended.



## How can Teladoc Health help?

### Osteoporosis

If you are a post-menopausal woman aged 50+, it's worth speaking to your doctor about whether you fulfill the risk criteria for a DEXA Scan. Our [Find a Doctor](#) service can help you locate an available physician.

If you have already received a diagnosis of osteoporosis and are looking for a second opinion on diagnosis or treatment plans, you may open a case with our [Expert Medical Opinion](#) team.

### Osteoarthritis

If you are looking for more information on how to maintain healthy bones and joints, our [Personal Health Navigator](#) can help locate appropriate resources.

If you are experiencing symptoms of osteoarthritis and would like to organize a formal assessment, our [Find a Doctor](#) Service can help locate an available family doctor.

If you have a diagnosis of osteoarthritis but would like a second opinion on your diagnosis or treatment plan, our [Expert Medical Opinion](#) service can help locate a specialist to review your case.

This guide is not meant to provide medical advice or service and should not be construed as the professional advice of Teladoc Health. As such, Teladoc Health does not guarantee or assume responsibility for the correctness of the information or its applicability regarding any specific factual situation. Personal health problems should be brought to the attention of physicians and appropriate health care professionals.

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- 1 "Facts and Stats: Osteoporosis Canada." Osteoporosis Canada , Osteoporosis Canada , 12 Oct. 2022, [osteoporosis.ca/facts-and-stats/](https://osteoporosis.ca/facts-and-stats/).
- 2 "Women and Arthritis." Arthritis Society Canada, Arthritis Society Canada, [arthritis.ca/living-well/2019/women-and-arthritis](https://arthritis.ca/living-well/2019/women-and-arthritis). Accessed 5 Jan. 2024.
- 3 "Osteoarthritis Symptoms and Diagnosis." Arthritis Society Canada, Arthritis Society Canada, [arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-\(a-z\)/types/osteoarthritis/osteoarthritis-symptoms-and-diagnosis](https://arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-(a-z)/types/osteoarthritis/osteoarthritis-symptoms-and-diagnosis). Accessed 5 Jan. 2024.

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About Teladoc Health: Teladoc Health is empowering all people everywhere to live healthier lives by transforming the healthcare experience. Recognized as the world leader in whole-person virtual care, Teladoc Health leverages clinical expertise, advanced technology and actionable data insights to meet the evolving needs of consumers and healthcare professionals.

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