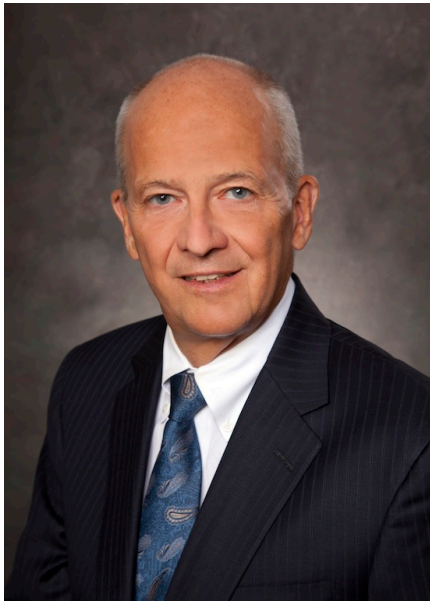


Expert Advice: How to Prevent Osteoporosis

Written by Lauren Topor



Dr. Shewmake, Medical Director at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona, has been in the medical field for 40 years. He has shared his expertise on preventative measures in warding off this “silent disease.”

Dr. Shewmake explains osteoporosis as a reduction in the strength and density in the bone due to deterioration inside of the bone, making it weak and fragile. The most common place for a break is in the hip or a compression in the spine.

Osteoporosis is known as the “silent disease” because it has few symptoms and causes little discomfort. Most people remain unaware that they carry the disease until they suffer a fracture or notice that they have lost height.

Those who are most prone to the disease include post-menopausal women, and 10 million Americans are affected by osteoporosis. Roughly eight million women and two million men have the “silent disease.”

Learn what to look for: Know the symptoms associated with osteoporosis. These include back pain, loss of height, bone fractures and protruding abdomen.

Understand the risk: Not getting enough exercise, smoking, alcohol consumption, and calcium and vitamin D deficiencies can raise your chance of osteoporosis.

Exercise: Weight-bearing activities like running, dancing and hiking are the best to build up bone strength.

Diet: Leafy greens, fatty fish, bananas, and soy products are high in calcium and vitamin D. Dr. Shewmake adds to look for foods that are “calcium fortified” like orange juice or many breakfast cereals.

Review medications: Some drugs may hinder bone health and raise the risk of fractures. Talk to your doctor to understand the side effects of each medication.

Monitor progress: Women over the age of 65 should talk to their doctor about getting screened.