

OSTEOPOROSIS

When you have osteoporosis, your bones become thin and more likely to break. Your doctor will diagnose it by looking at the strength of your bones, using a measure called Bone Mineral Density (BMD). A BMD below a certain score means you have osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is associated with coeliac disease because bone health relies on calcium, and people with gut damage may struggle to absorb calcium. There's another condition called osteopenia, where your BMD is lower than normal, but not as low as in osteoporosis.

Am I at risk?

Our BMD changes naturally through our lives – it's at its peak in our mid twenties. If, like many people, you weren't diagnosed with coeliac disease until later, you may not have been absorbing calcium properly for some time. This puts you more at risk of having a low BMD, and osteoporosis.

If you were diagnosed with coeliac disease in your childhood or teens and follow a gluten free diet, your long-term bone health isn't likely to be affected. Your BMD will usually improve after starting a gluten free diet. However, women diagnosed with coeliac disease after the menopause find it more difficult to improve their BMD. You're more at risk of osteoporosis as you get older and this risk increases if you have a low body weight, smoke or drink too much alcohol.

Should I be tested?

Osteoporosis is diagnosed by a bone scan, known as a Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry (DEXA) scan. This measures your BMD. Your GP or consultant will help you decide whether a DEXA scan is necessary.

What can I do about it?

You can help keep your bones strong by following

This information is for guidance only and should not replace advice given by your healthcare professional.

a healthy, balanced, gluten free diet rich in calcium.

If you have coeliac disease you need more calcium than the average person. Adults with coeliac disease should have at least 1000 milligrams (mg) of calcium every day. You can use the table overleaf to find good sources of calcium that are suitable for a gluten free diet.

How can I minimise the risks?

Lots of factors can reduce the risk of osteoporosis. For instance, having a healthy, active lifestyle. But if you have coeliac disease the most important factor is following a gluten free diet. This will allow your gut to heal and help you absorb more calcium, which is vital for bone health.

More things you can do:

- regular weight bearing exercise, such as jogging, and muscle strengthening exercise. Speak to your local healthcare team if unsure, as they can tailor exercise advice to your needs.
- avoid smoking
- avoid drinking too much alcohol

Another thing that can help is vitamin D. This helps you absorb calcium, and is made by your body when you get sunlight on your skin. In the UK, we can struggle to get enough from sunlight in the winter months. That means it's important to get vitamin D through our diet. Good sources include oily fish, eggs and products like margarine with added vitamin D.

Public Health England and the Scottish Government have published recommendations on vitamin D supplements. They say that vitamin D supplements should be considered in the winter months for everyone aged 4 years and older.



If you're pregnant or breastfeeding, housebound, or if you completely cover your skin outside, you should consider taking a daily vitamin D supplement all year. This also applies to children under four.

If you can't get all the calcium you need from your diet, you might need to take a calcium supplement. Some of these also contain vitamin D. Talk to your GP or another healthcare professional for advice.

If you have osteoporosis, there are drug treatments that can be used to lower the risk of broken bones. Your doctor will be able to advise and monitor you.

WHAT ARE GOOD SOURCES OF CALCIUM?

Food per serving	Calcium
Skimmed milk, 200ml	248mg
Semi skimmed milk, 200ml	244mg
Calcium enriched milk alternative eg soya/almond milk*, 200ml	240mg
Tinned sardines with bones, ½ can drained (42g)	230mg
Cheddar cheese, 30g	220mg
Canned rice pudding*, ½ can (200g)	180mg
Sesame seeds, 2 tablespoons	170mg
Yoghurt*, 100g	120 - 200mg
Kale, 80g	120mg
Baked beans*, ½ tin	105mg
Kidney beans, 120g	85mg
Dried figs, 30g	75mg
1 orange	70mg
Almonds, 30g	70mg
Gluten free bread*, 2 slices	75mg
Broccoli, 80g	30mg
Dried apricots, 30g	30mg

*Check Coeliac UK's Food and Drink Information for suitable products.

Visit www.coeliac.org.uk or call us on **0333 332 2033** for more information.

Whether you're eating out on the move, in restaurants, or shopping for gluten free food for you and your family, look out for our trusted symbols which mean we're working for you to make things better.



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