

Celiac Disease and Your Bones:

Did you know people with celiac disease may be at higher risk for bones to become weak and break?

These bone loss conditions are called osteoporosis and osteopenia. They can happen at any age if you have celiac disease. It's important for people with celiac disease to know that facts about osteoporosis and osteopenia: Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become thin and weak. They may also break easily. Osteopenia is also called low bone mass. The bones are thinning, but the bone loss is not as severe as having osteoporosis. People who have low bone mass and lose bone density over time may develop osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is often called a "silent disease." You can't feel or see your bones getting thin. Many people do not even know that they have osteoporosis until a bone breaks. The most common bones that break are the spine, wrist, or hip. People usually break bones as a result of a simple fall, often from a standing height. A broken bone can interfere with your daily activities and can have serious consequences.

How are celiac disease and bone health related?

Celiac disease is an autoimmune inflammatory condition. This means your immune system mistakenly attacks itself. It also won't allow the body to absorb nutrients. These nutrients include calcium and vitamin D. Both are needed for strong bones. In childhood and young adulthood, celiac disease may stop the development of peak bone mass. Peak bone mass is when bones are their strongest and most dense. In adults, celiac disease can lead to bone loss, increasing the risk for osteoporosis and broken bones.

How can a person with celiac disease protect their bones?

- Follow a gluten-free diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Choose foods high in calcium. Check food labels. You need 1000-1200 mg of calcium each day. Take a calcium supplement daily if needed.
- Get 600 to 800 IU or 15 to 20 mcg of vitamin D each day. Ask your health care provider for a list of foods high in vitamin D. You may need to a supplement to get that amount.
- Be physically active every day.
- Choose exercise focusing on moderate activity, such as walking, stretching, strengthening posture and range of motion. Talk to your health care provider about what exercises are best for you.
- Do not smoke and quit if you do.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.
- Take safety precautions to avoid falls. For example, at home remove scattered rugs and install hand railings in the shower and tub.

Ask your health care provider about whether you need a bone density test or treatment for any bone loss.