

# 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. A BMD below a certain score means you have osteoporosis.

It's 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 Bone Mineral Density 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.

### People with coeliac disease need more calcium than others.

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 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 gluten free.

### 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, walking, gardening and dancing
- 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.



## A healthy, balanced gluten free diet that's rich in calcium will help to keep your bones healthy.

If you're pregnant or breastfeeding, housebound, or if you completely cover your skin outside, you should consider taking a daily 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.

Visit [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://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.



## 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) .....	176mg
Sesame seeds, 2 teaspoons .....	170mg
Pot of yoghurt*, 125g .....	170mg
Fromage frais*, 2 x 47g pots .....	140mg
Pot of soya yoghurt*, 100g .....	120mg
Kale, 3 tablespoons (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 .....	70mg
Broccoli, 3 tablespoons (80g) .....	32mg
Dried apricots, 30g .....	30mg

\*Check your Food and Drink Directory for suitable products.

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