



## **BONE BASICS** | HOW TO FIND A DOCTOR

### **HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS WHO TREAT PATIENTS WITH OSTEOPOROSIS**

For many individuals, finding a doctor who is knowledgeable about osteoporosis can be difficult. There is no physician specialty solely dedicated to osteoporosis, nor is there a certification program for health professionals who treat the disease.

Over time, some doctors in various medical specialties have gained the knowledge and expertise to diagnose and treat people with osteoporosis. These specialties include endocrinology, family practice, geriatrics, gynecology, internal medicine, orthopedics, physical medicine and rehabilitation, and rheumatology. Not all doctors within a given specialty, however, have expertise in osteoporosis.

There are a number of ways to find a doctor who treats patients with osteoporosis.

### **CONTACT YOUR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER**

If you have a primary care physician or family doctor, discuss your concerns about osteoporosis prevention, diagnosis and treatment with him or her first. You may find that your doctor is quite knowledgeable about osteoporosis. Your own doctor, regardless of the specialty, may be the best person to treat your osteoporosis because they know your medical history, lifestyle and special needs.

If your doctor does not have expertise in managing osteoporosis, they may be able to refer you to someone who specializes in bone health and osteoporosis. If you are enrolled in an HMO or managed care insurance plan, your assigned physician should be able to assist you or give you an appropriate referral.

### **REACH OUT TO YOUR LOCAL HOSPITAL OR MEDICAL CENTER**

#### **Treatment Programs**

If you do not have a personal physician or your doctor cannot help, you can contact your nearest community hospital or medical center and ask if there is a department or program that cares for patients with osteoporosis. This department varies from hospital to hospital. For example, in some facilities, the department of endocrinology or metabolic bone disease treats osteoporosis patients, and in others it may be the department of rheumatology, orthopedics or gynecology. Some hospitals have a separate osteoporosis program or women's health clinic that treats osteoporosis patients. Not all hospitals, however, have departments or programs that focus on osteoporosis.

You can also search the internet using terms such as Osteoporosis Clinic or Bone Health Clinic to find physician practices in your area that treat osteoporosis. If you do not have a computer, you may be able to access the Internet at your local public library.

### Physician Referral Services

You may want to inquire whether your local hospital has a physician referral service. Let the referral service know that you are seeking a doctor who has specialized knowledge in treating patients with osteoporosis. If you prefer a doctor in a specific specialty, such as endocrinology, tell the referral service that you would like an endocrinologist who diagnoses and treats patients with osteoporosis.

Many hospital websites list the physicians that are on staff. Take a look at the information about the individual doctors, like their clinical interests and subspecialties. In addition to bone health or osteoporosis, you may see the term “metabolic bone disease” which includes the treatment of osteoporosis.

### BHOF FIND A PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

The Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation (BHOFF) offers the Professional Partners Network® (PPN) Directory as a public service to help you find healthcare providers in your area who offer osteoporosis prevention, diagnosis and/or treatment services. The healthcare providers listed in the directory pay an annual fee to be a member of the PPN Directory and each member is able to provide a description of their services to accompany their listing in the directory.

The PPN Directory is not a complete listing of all healthcare providers in any geographic area. Be sure to make appropriate local inquiries about specific qualifications before selecting a provider. BHOFF does not make representations or guarantees about the qualifications or quality of care provided by any of the healthcare providers or healthcare organizations listed in the directory. BHOFF does not assess the quality of services offered by the healthcare providers and healthcare organizations listed in the directory. Individuals listed in the directory have simply noted their willingness to be listed and to accept new patients. Listing in the directory is not a recommendation or endorsement of the healthcare provider or organization by BHOFF.

For a listing of healthcare providers in your state, visit BHOFF's Web site at [www.bonehealthandosteoporosis.org](http://www.bonehealthandosteoporosis.org). Click on Find a Professional at the top and use the pull-down menu for the list in your state.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you are unable to locate a healthcare provider in your area, the following organizations may be able to help:

#### **American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE)**

Website: <https://www.aace.com/find-an-endo>

#### **Endocrine Society**

Website: [www.endocrine.org/patient-engagement/find-an-endocrinologist-directory](http://www.endocrine.org/patient-engagement/find-an-endocrinologist-directory)



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### **American College of Rheumatology (ACR)**

Website: [www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver](http://www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver)

### **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**

Website: [www.acog.org/womens-health/find-an-ob-gyn](http://www.acog.org/womens-health/find-an-ob-gyn)

## **MEDICAL SPECIALISTS WHO OFTEN TREAT OSTEOPOROSIS**

**Endocrinologists** treat the endocrine system, which includes the glands and hormones that help control the body's metabolic activity. In addition to osteoporosis, conditions often treated by endocrinologists include diabetes, thyroid disorders and pituitary diseases.

**Family physicians** have a broad range of training that includes surgery, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology and pediatrics. They place special emphasis on caring for an individual or family on a long-term, continuing basis.

**Geriatricians** are family healthcare providers or internists. They receive additional training on the aging process and are able to evaluate and treat the common conditions and diseases that may occur among the elderly, including ongoing health issues, incontinence, falls and dementia.

**Gynecologists** diagnose and treat conditions of the female reproductive system and associated disorders. They may serve as primary healthcare providers for women and follow their patients' reproductive health over time.

**Internists** are trained in the essentials of overall care of general internal medicine. Internists diagnose and non-surgically treat all diseases of the body. They provide long-term comprehensive care in the hospital and office and often act as consultants to other specialists. They develop expertise in many areas including cardiology, neurology, and pulmonology.

**Orthopedic surgeons** are healthcare providers trained in the care of patients with musculoskeletal problems. They treat patients with congenital skeletal deformities, bone injuries and infections, and metabolic disturbances. Also called orthopedists, they are surgeons who operate to correct, fix or replace joints and limbs.

**Physiatrists** are healthcare providers who specialize in physical medicine and rehabilitation. Physiatrists evaluate and treat patients with impairments, disabilities or pain arising from musculoskeletal, neurological or other system problems. Physiatrists focus on restoring the physical, psychological, social and occupational functioning of the individual.

**Rheumatologists** diagnose and treat diseases of the joints, muscles, bones and tendons, including arthritis and collagen diseases. The rheumatologist may work closely with other specialists such as orthopedists, physiatrists and physical therapists.



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### OTHER HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

**Physical therapists**, with experience in osteoporosis, are a resource for patients seeking guidance on appropriate exercise and activities and those to avoid. Physical therapists can perform balance assessment and training that is important in preventing falls and can also help with posture, body mechanics and safe movement. A written prescription is usually required to see a physical therapist.

**Dietitians** are a resource for nutrition information and special dietary needs. Most hospitals have dietitians on staff, and many offer outpatient instruction.

**Occupational therapists** can also help you return to your daily activities and reduce your risk of falls, so you can live more independently.