**What is Osteoporosis?**
Osteoporosis is a disease of the bones that causes thinning and weakening of the bones. Those who have osteoporosis have fragile bones and are at an increased risk for fractures.

**Why Should You Care About Osteoporosis?**
Osteoporosis bone fractures are responsible for considerable pain, which can lead to a decrease in quality of life, loss of workdays, and disability. About 30% of patients that suffer from a hip fracture will require long-term nursing-home care. Also someone who experiences a spine fracture due to osteoporosis is at a higher risk of suffering from additional fractures over the next few years.

**How do I know if I have osteoporosis?**
Osteoporosis is often called a “silent disease” because bone loss occurs without symptoms. Many people do not find out that they have osteoporosis until after they have broken a bone. To find out if you have osteoporosis, your doctor can perform a bone density test. This is a special x-ray test called a DXA that measures the thickness of your bones. However it does not say for sure if your bones will break. Your doctor can tell you if your bone density is low enough to mean that you have osteoporosis.

To find out if you are at risk for developing osteoporosis visit ONU HealthWise and get a simple heel scan preformed. A heel scan uses ultrasound waves to screen the bone density. This test is not for diagnostic purposes such as a DXA scan, however it will give you a better idea of your personal risk of developing osteoporosis.

**How can I reduce my risk of Osteoporosis?**
Osteoporosis is a preventable disease. You can decrease your risk for developing osteoporosis by having a healthy lifestyle. Some tips to help decrease your risk are listed below.

- Exercise is good for bone health, muscle strength and balance. Exercises that are good for your bones include walking, jogging, stair climbing and weight lifting.
- Most people do not get enough calcium and vitamin D. Calcium is an important building block for bones. Vitamin D helps your bones use calcium. Most people at risk for osteoporosis should get approximately 1,200 mg of calcium and 800-1000 international units of vitamin D daily.
- Limit the amount of alcohol that you consume.
- If you smoke, consider quitting.

**Prescribed Medications**
As bone density worsens, your physician may prescribe medications that prevent and/or treat osteoporosis. Currently, the FDA has approved five types of drugs for this purpose. Most are in the form of a pill, a few are given by a shot under the skin, some are directly given into the vein using an IV and one is a nasal spray. Some are taken once a day, while others are taken once a week, once a month, or even less often. To find out if you may benefit from taking one of these medications, ask your doctor.