



The _____ Family Backbone Tree
(insert family name)



Osteoporosis affects 1 in **3 women** and 1 in **5 men** over the age of 50 years

Does Osteoporosis Run in Your Family?

Osteoporosis is a thinning and weakening of the bones and can cause bones to break easily. It affects one in three women and one in five men over the age of 50 years, and can give rise to considerable pain, suffering and disability.

One of the risk factors is a family history of the disease or a history of broken bones resulting from minor falls.

Some of the early signs of osteoporosis include breaking a bone after a minor fall, height loss greater than one inch, curving of the spine and pain in the lower back.

This Family Backbone Tree will help you to trace back your roots and identify family members who may have displayed the signs of osteoporosis.

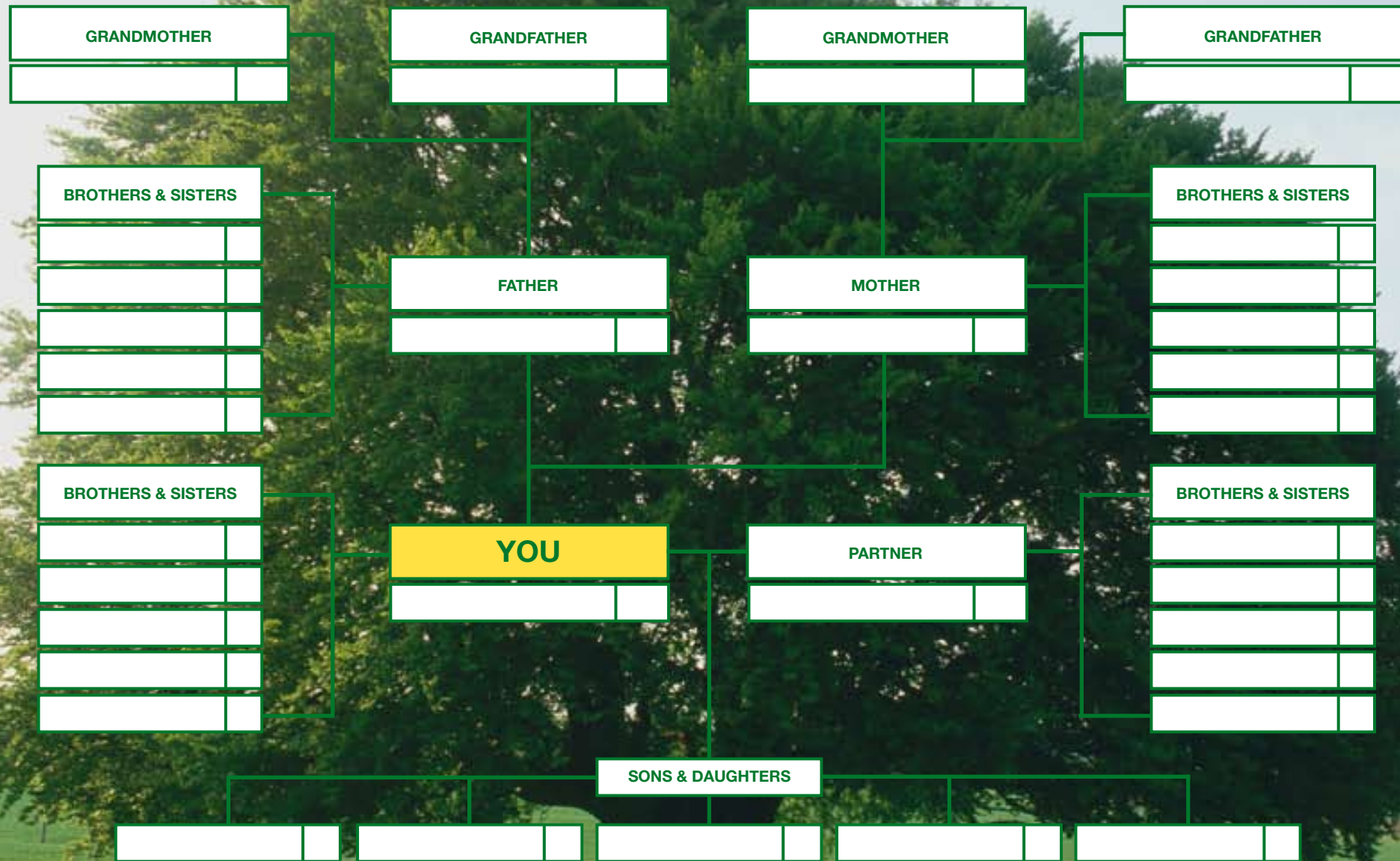
When completing your family tree, tick each person who may have had any of the following:

- A diagnosis of osteoporosis
- Loss of height, shown as a rounding or curving of the spine
- A broken or fractured hip
- Frequent broken bones from minor falls

Keeping Your Backbone!

Once you have completed the family tree consider how many people in your family displayed the signs of osteoporosis. While we cannot control factors such as our family history of the disease or our gender (women are more likely to develop osteoporosis than men), remember, vitamin D is vital for calcium to be properly absorbed and you need both for strong, healthy bones. Why not talk to your GP about your risk factors for osteoporosis and your calcium and vitamin D intake? You are the backbone of your family after all!

Your Family Backbone Tree



Tick for Signs of Osteoporosis

Building Bones Across the Generations

It is important to build strong, healthy bones over the course of a lifetime.

Children and Teenagers: Childhood and teenage years are a critical time for developing the healthy bones that will carry us through life. If we don't pay attention to our bone health at this time, then we run the risk of osteoporosis in later life. Therefore, children and teenagers need to be getting plenty of calcium and vitamin D, have an adequate calorie intake, and it is also important that they take part in weight-bearing activity each day, for example, playing football, basketball, etc.

Thirty and Upwards: Once we reach our mid-30s, we slowly begin to lose bone mass and so we need to undertake at least 30 minutes of weight-bearing exercise (e.g. walking, running, dancing, etc.) that puts some stress on our bones every day. We should also ensure we have a healthy diet and, for women, that periods are regular.

Fifty and Upwards: Bone loss is further accelerated in women over 50 years as, following menopause, hormone production, which helps protect bones, drops sharply. Therefore, it is even more vital to ensure that we are doing all we can to protect our bone health.

Some risk factors for osteoporosis include:

- Previous broken bone after a minor fall.
- Women who were over 16 years when they had their first period, or missed menstrual periods for more than six months and were not pregnant, or who have had an early menopause or a hysterectomy.
- Men with low levels of the male hormone testosterone.

- Low body weight or history of an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia.
- Psychological stress.
- Long-term use of corticosteroids and certain other medications.
- Maternal history of a hip fracture.
- Malabsorption, inflammatory bowel disease (Coeliac disease, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis) and gastric surgery.
- Lack of exercise, long-term immobility or excessive exercise.
- Smoking and heavy drinking.

The risk also depends on how much bone mass you had as a young adult and how quickly you lose it as you age. If you have one or more of the risk factors, you should talk to your GP.

Vitamin D and Your Bones

Getting adequate vitamin D is particularly important for post-menopausal women with osteoporosis. Without adequate vitamin D, calcium cannot be properly absorbed. Vitamin D is therefore an essential component of osteoporosis treatment.

Vitamin D reduces the risk of fractures and helps reduce bone loss in people with osteoporosis. Vitamin D has also been demonstrated to improve muscle strength and body sway helping to prevent falls in people with, or at risk of, osteoporosis.

Talk to your doctor today about ensuring you receive adequate levels of calcium and vitamin D.

Visit www.breakingpoint.ie for further information