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OSTEOPOROSIS

We worry about our heart. Our liver. Our eyes. But somehow, concerns about our bones tend not to cross our minds. But for many adults, the health of their bones is a leading problem. One in four women and one in eight men have Osteoporosis.

This disease occurs when bone tissue deteriorates, leading to an increased risk of fracture especially in the hip, wrist and spine. Osteoporosis is often called the 'silent thief' because bone loss occurs without symptoms. But it doesn't happen overnight. A person can lose bone mass for years without experiencing any symptoms or signs until they fracture a bone.

How is osteoporosis caused? It is difficult to say, as there is no single identifiable cause for this condition. Although it is more common in women than men, both should be assessed for their risk when over the age of 50.



According to Osteoporosis Canada, risk factors for low bone mineral density, future fractures and falls include:

- If either parent has had a hip fracture.
- Having had a prior fracture with minimal trauma.
- Long-term (more than 3 months) use of glucocorticoid therapy such as prednisone.
- Rheumatoid arthritis.
- Current smoker.
- History of falls in the past 12 months.
- Vertebral fracture apparent on x-ray.
- High alcohol intake (3 or more drinks per day); and
- Weight loss greater than 10% since age 25.

TIP: Just one cup of milk can contain up to 300 mg of calcium, which is the amount of calcium needed for someone over 50!

You may wonder why women are more at risk than men for this disease. After all, many of the risk factors listed above could apply to anyone. Women are more vulnerable because estrogen plays a role in keeping bones healthy and these levels decline in menopause.

However, it is important for everyone to maintain a

THE HEALTH OF YOUR BONES

healthy lifestyle. Cutting down on excessive drinking and quitting smoking can be difficult, but the benefit of reducing the risk for not only osteoporosis, but many other diseases, is enormous.



One thing everyone can do is consider their calcium and vitamin D intake. In order to maintain healthy bones, your diet must be rich in these two vitamins.

Calcium is important at every stage of life. In kids, calcium helps to build strong bones, as adults it maintains bone density and as we age, it reduces the risk of bone fractures.

Did you know that every cell in our body needs calcium to function properly? Our body regulates blood levels of calcium to ensure that levels stay within normal range. When the blood levels are lower than the range, calcium is removed from the bone to bring these levels back to normal. It is only when blood calcium levels are above the normal range that calcium is deposited into the bone.

Confused? Think of it this way: Your bones are a calcium bank, with deposits and withdrawals being made according to how much calcium you intake, just like money in a regular bank. And who doesn't want more money?

Vitamin D is also important, as it helps with calcium absorption. So, how do you get more of these key nutrients? When people think of Vitamin D and calcium, they often think of sunshine and milk. But there's plenty of quick and easy ways to get the right amount of these vitamins.

Osteoporosis Canada recommends these amounts:

Age	Calcium Requirement	Vitamin D Requirement
4-8	800 mg	200 IU
9-18	1300 mg	200 IU
19-50	1000 mg	400-1000 IU
50+	1200 mg	800-2000 IU*
Pregnant or lactating women 18+	1000 mg	400-1000 IU

Those amounts might seem like a lot, but don't let the numbers intimidate you. Just one cup of milk can contain up to 300 mg of calcium, which is ¼ the amount of calcium needed for someone over 50!

Delicious snacks like a 3-cm cube of mozzarella cheese contain 200 mg and ½ a cup of dry roasted almonds pack in 186 mg of calcium.

Vegetables also provide calcium, as do fish products containing bones (canned salmon and sardines) and meat alternatives such as lentils and beans.

Vitamin D can be a bit more tricky to get just through food. Fish such as canned pink salmon is a great source. Just 75 g contains 435 IU of vitamin D. But if you can't get the right amount of either calcium or vitamin D, supplements are a great idea.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Source: Osteoporosis Canada



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