

Osteoporosis Explained

Osteoporosis is a debilitating disease that affects the bones of mostly adult patients. While there is currently no known medical cure for osteoporosis, there are diet and lifestyle choices that you can make to help prevent the condition.

As one of the most common types of arthritis, osteoporosis occurs when there is too much calcium lost from the bones. When the bones lose excessive calcium, the degree of bone density is also affected. Osteoporosis can cause bones to become fragile and brittle, substantially increasing the risk of bone fractures. Women are significantly more likely to suffer from the degree of calcium loss that is required to decrease bone density and result in osteoporosis.

Like many of the medical conditions that commonly affect us, prevention is the key to keeping osteoporosis at bay. If you know that you are at risk for osteoporosis, as many of us are, you should consider consuming a diet high in calcium. Most health and dietary professionals will recommend that you include 1500 mg of calcium each day. There are certain high-calcium foods including milk, dairy-based foods, salmon, sardines, and other fishes that are great choices for providing a natural calcium boost.

Speak with your doctor about supplementing your diet with calcium and, possibly, vitamin D. Your doctor or dietician may suggest that you supplement your diet with additional Vitamin D to aid in absorbing this extra calcium. Natural sunlight provides a great source of Vitamin D, so you can absorb this important element simply by spending more time in the sun. If over-the-counter supplements are required, you may be able to achieve the required levels of Vitamin D and calcium with just one multivitamin. Speak with your doctor to make sure that you are getting all of the nutrients you need to prevent osteoporosis. He or she will be able to assess your condition and suggest the appropriate level of required supplements.

Doctors suggest that women who have already been diagnosed with osteoporosis may find estrogen treatment to be a viable option. This form of therapy can help to increase bone mass and density in the spine and hips, and may actually cut a woman's risk of developing osteoporosis. Estrogen replacement therapy has also been shown to reduce the risk of heart failure and heart attacks. There are certain side effects, though, that must be acknowledged, including a possible link to breast cancer that has been suggested by certain studies. New information is being released every few months on this issue, so check with your doctor.

If you are a drinker or a smoker, your doctor may also advise you to limit these activities as much as possible. Research has shown that smoking will lower your estrogen levels, and leave you bones at greater risk for losing bone mass. Moderate to heavy alcohol use has also been directly linked to the loss of bone density.

Another important preventive step is to make sure you're getting enough regular exercise. Improving muscle strength through weight-bearing exercise can help to build essential bone mass. Walking is another great choice to help prevent osteoporosis, and to boost your overall good health.

Individuals suffering from osteoporosis have other treatment options to consider. Prescription drug medications are available to help restore bone density and slow the progress of the condition, and new drug therapies are currently in development. It's important to have a professional health assessment and understand all of your treatment options, before deciding on the method of therapy that's best for you.

If you think you have osteoporosis, or may be at risk for developing the condition, speak with your doctor. Find out more about the steps you can take to prevent the onset, and the osteoporosis treatment options that are available to help you live more comfortably with the disease.