

Exercise & Osteoporosis: Minimizing Bone Density Loss

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To some people, osteoporosis* is a big word, a disease that happens to someone else, primarily older women. For those of us that are “too young to have it”, we probably don’t talk about or even think about osteoporosis. However, everyone probably knows someone, a relative, neighbor or friend, who has osteoporosis or is at risk for getting it in the future. Now is the time to start doing something to minimize risk. You are never too young!

What can we do? There are four steps we can take to help prevent osteoporosis:

- Eat a balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D;
- Perform weight-bearing exercise;
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle with no smoking or excessive alcohol intake; and
- Have bone density testing and take medication when appropriate.

Let’s address exercise. Regular, consistent exercising is the way to go. A program with both cardiovascular and strength training exercises will put you on your way to preventing bone loss and possibly even increasing your bone density. Resistance/strength training exercises should be done at least two to three times a week, while cardio can be done more often. Walking, racquet sports and hiking are all good examples of cardiovascular exercise. If you have a sedentary lifestyle or already have osteoporosis, it is very important to work with a certified personal trainer who is knowledgeable about the dos and don’ts of exercising with these conditions. A good trainer will be in close contact with your healthcare provider to determine the optimal program for you. If you don’t have osteoporosis, you could still be a risk for developing it later in life. So if you are not already doing weight bearing exercise you can contact me to begin your own exercise program.

***Osteoporosis is a disease characterized by low bone mass and structural deterioration of bone tissue, leading to bone fragility and an increased susceptibility to fractures**

Osteoporosis risk factors:

- Personal history of fracture after age 50
- Current low bone mass
- History of fracture in an immediate relative
- Being female

- Being thin and/or having a small frame
- Advanced age
- A family history of osteoporosis
- Estrogen deficiency as a result of menopause, especially early or surgically induced
- Abnormal absence of menstrual periods
- Anorexia nervosa
- Low lifetime calcium intake
- Use of certain medications, such as corticosteroids and anticonvulsants
- Low testosterone levels in men
- An inactive lifestyle
- Current cigarette smoking
- Excessive use of alcohol
- Being Caucasian or Asian, although African Americans and Hispanic Americans are at significant risk as well

Above information from the National Osteoporosis Foundation <http://www.nof.org>

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