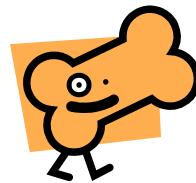


Osteoporosis

By Dr. Fred Raleigh, Plus Magazine, Dec. 2006

Question: I read a great deal to keep a healthy lifestyle and have a good quality of life. I do read a great deal about the possibility of osteoporosis developing as I age. I am 67 year old female. Due to what I read and my concerns I asked my primary care physician about my chances of developing or having osteoporosis. My primary care physician felt that, due to my size (I am a size 12) that I should not be worried. I did talk to her about a possible bone density test and was told that we should probably wait for awhile. Is there anything I can do to help prevent osteoporosis?

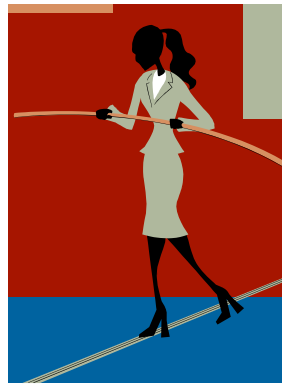


BT Paso Robles

Answer: It is nice that you seek out information about keeping yourself fit and insuring a good quality of life for yourself.

Osteoporosis is a disease where the bone loses internal mass, which causes the bone to weaken and be unable to support your body properly. People with osteoporosis can suffer from fractures very easily. Both men and women develop

osteoporosis. Strangely though, we are paying more attention to a woman's chance of developing the disorder than we are paying attention to men's chances of having this problem.

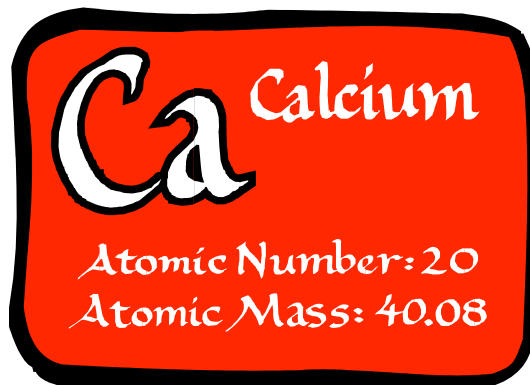


There are known risk factors. By knowing what they are you can reduce your chances of developing osteoporosis or slow the progress to osteoporosis. Some of these factors you cannot change – like genetic ones.

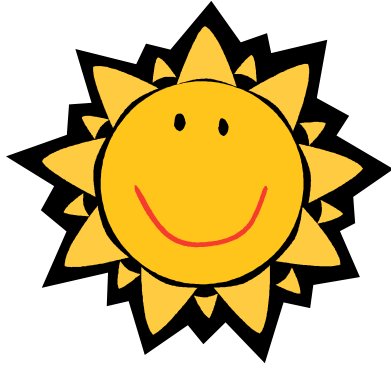
Risk factors that lead to lowered bone mass include: a strong family history for osteoporosis, being over the age of 70, having had a fragility fracture (this is where you can fracture a bone anywhere in your body by simply moving the wrong way and/or by falling over, generally sideways and suffering a fracture of a hip joint), smoking, being very thin, you had a premature removal of your ovaries and did not undergo hormone replacement therapy, excessive consumption of alcohol, long term use of steroids, a history of thyroid disease, lower than normal levels of testosterone (males in this case), some form of malabsorption state like celiac disease and finally, hyperparathyroidism. Whew, this is a long list of things that can lead or contribute to osteoporosis. Unfortunately if you have combinations or more than one of the above your risks are higher.

There are things that you can do and there are tests and procedures that can be conducted to ease some of your worries.

First, every aging individual over the age of 60 should probably be insuring an adequate intake of calcium and Vitamin D. Daily dietary calcium or supplements should approach 1 gram for women and 1.5grams for men. It is best to take supplements of calcium with meals or slightly after a meal. Your body seems to pick-up the calcium better if it is mixed with food. I guess this tricks your body to assume that the supplement is actually from food.



Next, you should insure that you are getting an adequate amount of vitamin D on a daily basis. The best way to get vitamin D is to get out into the sunshine for about 20 minutes a day being sure to expose as much of your arms, legs and body as possible. Though in today's culture most people use sunscreen and this will reduce the impact of the sun ability to help your skin manufacturer Vitamin D. Of course this may be difficult in the cooler winter months.



If you cannot get out into the sun then I would suggest that you take approximately 1,000 units of Vitamin D daily. The vitamin D helps the calcium to get to the bones. You can also do light impact exercising such as daily walks to help with bone growth and integrity.

Lastly, there are a series of test that should be conducted for an osteoporosis workup and bone mass is just one of them. Other tests may include but not be limited to: a Chem. Panel that includes looking at calcium levels and creatinine, a 25-OH vitamin D level, thyroid panel, total testosterone (males), a 24 hour urine calcium level and even possible protein electrophoresis.

Finally, it is best to ensure adequate daily calcium and vitamin D intake along with some light impact exercise to help your bones. You may want to talk with your doctor again about your concerns as there are prescription medications, known as the bisphosphonates (Fosamax) that can help to build bone mass.