

It's Never Too Late to Take Control of Your Bone Health!

By 2020, half of all Americans over 50 will have weak bones and be at risk for fractures from osteoporosis unless we make changes to our diet and lifestyle. The risk for falls increases as we get older and people with weak bones are a higher risk for fractures. We are living longer with better medical care and technology, so we need to keep our bones strong in order to be active and enjoy life.

The 2004 Surgeon General's Report on Bone Health and Osteoporosis says that 10 million Americans over the age of 50 have osteoporosis, the most common bone disease, while another 34 million are at risk for developing osteoporosis. And each year, 1.5 million people suffer a bone fracture related to osteoporosis.

So, What is Osteoporosis? Osteoporosis means "porous bone." This means your bones have lost density or mass. As your bones become less dense, they become weaker. For some people affected by the disease, simple activities such as lifting a child or bumping into furniture can cause a bone to break. IT'S THAT SERIOUS! The most likely bones to break are in the hip, spine, or wrist.

Who gets Osteoporosis? Some people think that bones are hard and lifeless. But, your bones are actually living, growing tissue. Throughout your life, you constantly lose old bone while you make new bone at the same time. So, that means that **anyone** can be at risk for osteoporosis.

Factors you can't control:

- Being female (Of the 10 million Americans estimated to have osteoporosis, 80% are women)
- Getting older
- Menopause
- Having a small, thin body
- Having a family history of osteoporosis
- Being Caucasian or Asian

Factors you can control:

- Smoking
- Drinking too much alcohol/caffeine
- A diet low in calcium and vitamin D
- Not getting enough exercise (This can affect more than just your bone health)

How do I find out if I have Osteoporosis? Osteoporosis is often called the "silent disease" because bone loss occurs without symptoms. Bone Density Tests (DXA Scan) can measure how strong or fragile your bones are. There are also screening tools that can be used to predict your risk of breaking a bone.

The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends a bone density test for:

- ✓ Women age 65 or older
- ✓ Postmenopausal women under age 65 with risk factors
- ✓ Men age 70 or older
- ✓ Men age 50-69 with risk factors
- ✓ Anyone who has broken a bone after age 50

Some Alarming Facts that YOU should be aware of

- ❖ In 2005, osteoporosis-related fractures were responsible for an estimated \$19 billion in costs.
- ❖ By 2025, experts predict that these costs will rise to approximately \$25.3 billion.
- ❖ 50% of women and 25% of men over the age 50 will have osteoporosis-related fracture in their remaining lifetime.
- ❖ The rate of hip fractures is 2-3X higher in women than men; however, the one year mortality following a hip fracture is 2X as high for men.
- ❖ A women's risk of a hip fracture is equal to her combined risk of breast, uterine, and ovarian cancer.
- ❖ 20% of people with a hip fracture lose their independence.
- ❖ At six months after a hip fracture, **85%** of people can not walk across the room without using an assisted device such as a cane or walker!

What happens after I get diagnosed with Osteoporosis? Based on the results of your medical history, physical examination, and bone density test, you and your Physician can develop a plan to protect your bones. You may be referred to a Physical Therapist who can teach you safe exercises to improve your strength, balance, and coordination.

Can Physical Therapy Help someone with Osteoporosis? Yes! Physical therapy can help. Falling and the fear of falling may be reduced by physical therapist intervention, says the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). During the evaluation, the PT will check your strength, flexibility, and balance. Then he will design an individualized program of weight-bearing exercises (best form of exercise for people with Osteoporosis) and balance activities to address your weaknesses. ***Physical therapy can help you feel healthier and more confident so you can get back to the activities you enjoy!***

Did you know that each year about one-third of all persons over the age 65 will fall? That's a lot of potential fractures! Balance, strength, and coordination are so important in preventing falls. A physical therapist can work with you on improving these functional qualities.

Our Facility has a program designed specifically for people with Osteoporosis. Since most falls are preventable, our PT's can teach you how to make your environment safer so you can lower your chances of falling. Talk to your doctor about referring you for Physical Therapy.

References

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health: <http://www.womenshealth.gov>

National Osteoporosis Foundation: <http://www.nof.org>

The 2004 Surgeon General's Report on Bone Health and Osteoporosis: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov>

National Institutes of Health Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases-National Resource Center

<http://www.niams.nih.gov/bone>

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