

osteoporosis

Osteoporosis seems like something we are not too concerned about until we reach our 60s. In fact, most people probably know it as something their grandparents complain about. But the reality is that osteoporosis, or bone loss, is a result of habits that are developed early. Proper eating and nutrition will not only help prevent osteoporosis, but also ensure better current health and bone strength.

Osteoporosis and bone loss result when the cells that destroy bone matter are doing so faster than the cells that form bones can make them. As a result bones become weaker and prone to injury and pain as they cannot support the body.

Osteoporosis, which means “porous bones,” causes bones to become weak and brittle — so brittle that even mild stresses like bending over, lifting a vacuum cleaner or coughing can cause a fracture. In most cases, bones weaken when you have low levels of calcium, phosphorus and other minerals in your bones.

PREVENTION

Getting adequate calcium and Vitamin D is an important factor in reducing your risk of osteoporosis. If you already have osteoporosis, getting adequate calcium and Vitamin D, as well as taking other measures, can help prevent your bones from becoming weaker. In some cases you may even be able to replace bone you’ve lost. One of the best ways to prevent osteoporosis is to protect and strengthen your bones at a young age. This includes getting enough calcium and Vitamin D in your diet.

Calcium, with Vitamin D, lowers the rates of bone loss and protects against fractures. While everyone hears about the importance of calcium, little notice is made about Vitamin D, which is a vital part to strong bones because it plays a central role in the body’s absorption of calcium and the process of turning the calcium into bone. Without enough Vitamin D, the calcium may not make it to the bloodstream. We need an abundance of both for healthy, strong bones.

The suggested consumption is 3 cups each day of low-fat or fat-free milk or equivalent milk products. Consuming milk fortified with Vitamin D ensures that there is enough Vitamin D to assist in the absorption of calcium. There are 100 mg of Vitamin D per 8 oz. fortified milk. The recommended dose is 200 mg up to 50 years of age, 400 mg from 51-70 years and 600 mg after age 71.

FOODS HIGH IN CALCIUM

- Dairy products such as milk and cheese
- Orange juice or soy milk fortified with calcium
- Yogurt (a dairy product and excellent source of calcium that many who are lactose intolerance can enjoy)

FOODS HIGH IN VITAMIN D

- Vitamin D fortified milk
- Fatty fish, i.e. salmon and tuna
- Fish oils, i.e. cod liver oil
- Supplements
- Sunlight (UV rays from sunlight trigger Vitamin D synthesis in the skin, about 15 minutes in the sun a day)

*Harvard Medical School 2003
National Institute of Health 2004 and 2008
Mayo Clinic 2008
USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005
Epicurean Group 2010*