

Osteoporosis Prevention

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Almost 20 million women in the United States are at risk of developing or already have the potentially crippling bone disorder osteoporosis, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association. One in two women and one in eight men will suffer an osteoporosis related fracture in their life. What is unfortunate, is that these fractures may be the only symptom these patients have. It is estimated that 80% of those with osteoporosis are completely unaware. This is because osteoporosis is painless, that is - until you experience a break. Prevention of the disorder is the focus of the most recent research because it is easier to keep one's bones strong, than it is to strengthen already brittle bones.

It is important to be aware of the factors that put someone at risk for the disorder and make sure to ask their health care professional to perform a bone density test. The most significant risk factors include:

1. Females – especially thin Caucasian or Asian
2. Family history of osteoporosis
3. Post-menopausal women and the elderly
4. Physical inactivity
5. Those taking corticosteroids, thyroid meds, anticonvulsants, anticoagulants, Dilantin, diuretics or drugs that alter digestion such as Ranitidine
6. Smokers
7. Heavy drinkers
8. Heavy drinkers of coffee, pop or other carbonated beverages
9. Those with low calcium and vitamin D intake
10. Individual suffering from chronic kidney, lung, stomach or intestinal disease
11. Those with significant hormonal changes due to menopause or hysterectomy

While there are no known cures for osteoporosis, there are many ways to slow its progress. These involve some lifestyle changes. The most significant and beneficial change is to increase the amount of exercise you get. Weight bearing exercise for 20 minutes, for a minimum of three times per week can decrease bone loss and may even strengthen already weakened bones. Walking, jogging, racquet sports, lifting weights and aerobics are all beneficial. A health care professional should be consulted prior to starting an exercise program to assure one's safety. In addition to exercise, people need to stand up straight. Bones were designed to bear weight in a certain fashion. Poor posture places excess pressure on muscles and bones in your system that were not designed to bear extra weight. Good posture doesn't prevent osteoporosis, but it helps maintain your musculoskeletal system and balance, which can help keep you on your feet. Most osteoporosis related breaks happen as a result of a fall.

Maintaining bone density becomes much harder to do after the age of thirty. We are all aware that a child's diet is important to build strong healthy bones. Diet is equally important in maintaining these bones later in life. Calcium and vitamin D are the two most important in osteoporosis prevention. The most reliable way to assure adequate consumption and absorption of these are through supplements. Much of our milk and produce has been stripped of useful nutrients or is full of unabsorbable nutrients, making it tough to consume enough of the requirements needed for healthy bones.

Quitting smoking and making healthier choices at the dinner table along with avoiding coffee and carbonated beverages can drastically reduce the rate of bone loss and prevent osteoporosis. Talk to your doctor of chiropractic to see what else you can do to maintain and improve the health of your bones.