

# Health & Science

## Fosamax Prevented and Treated Osteoporosis Study Shows

The medicine Fosamax (alendronate sodium) both treated and prevented the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis in men and women who had or were at risk for it because of the glucocorticoids (steroids) they took for asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), according to new data presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI).

About 30 million Americans have diseases that often required treatment with steroids. Of these, more than 4 million Americans take steroid drugs to control asthma and other diseases characterized by shortness of breath (COPD). Bone loss is rapid in people who take steroids—they can lose up to 10% of their bone mineral density (BMD) in the first year of treatment alone, with much of the bone loss occurring within weeks to months after starting treatment. In fact, 11% of those who have taken steroids for at least one year for asthma suffer spine fractures. According to epidemiological studies, the risk of fracture from osteoporosis doubles with each 10% of BMD lost. BMD is an indicator of bone strength.

In this study, men and women treated with Fosamax stopped bone loss and increase bone mineral density (BMD) at the spine and hip, two common sites of osteoporotic fracture.

"For more than 40 years, osteoporosis has been avoidable, dev-

astating outcome for millions of people who depend on steroids to control serious diseases including asthma and COPD," said Ronald Emkey, M.D., investigator of the study and director of The Bone Research Center of The Reading Hospital and Medical Center, West Reading, PA. "This new research offers a promising solution in helping to prevent and reverse osteoporosis in men and women of all ages who need to take steroid medications."

"Although the study was not powered to detect fracture risk reductions, the study showed a trend with Fosamax and those on placebo in these studies. Despite the concomitant use of steroids and the extensive use of aspirin and NSAIDs, medications that are known to cause GI side effects, there was no difference in the rate of esophageal adverse events and peptic ulcers between people treated with Fosamax and those given placebo.

To receive maximum benefit from Fosamax and to reduce the potential for esophageal irritation, patients must take the medicine upon waking for the day at least 30 minutes before the first food, beverage or other medication of the day with a full glass of water (six to eight ounces) only. After swallowing Fosamax, patients must not lie down and should stay fully upright (sitting or standing) for at least 30 minutes and until after first

food of the day. Patients should not chew or suck on the tablets.

Osteoporosis is a bone-thinning disease that leads to 1.8 million



fractures per year in the United States alone. The disease costs the U.S. health care system \$13.8 billion annually.

Fosamax was cleared in 1995 for the treatment of osteoporosis in postmenopausal women and Paget's disease and in 1997 for prevention of osteoporosis in postmenopausal women. Fosamax is marketed by Merck & Co., Inc.

## Legacy Helps Caregivers Take Care of Themselves

Legacy Health System has developed an innovative educational program to give caregivers the skills to take care of themselves. "Taking Care of You: Powerful Tools for Caregiving" is designed to aid those who

range in age from spouses caring for husbands or wives, adult children caring for parents, and friends who help care for neighbors. The next series will be held during April and May at five locations throughout the Portland metropolitan area as well as in the Redmond, Bend, Ashland and Grants Pass areas. The course is free thanks to a generous grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust.

"Our program is modeled after Stanford University's successful chronic disease Self-Management Program," states Leslie Congleton, program manager. "Participants are instructed by trained leaders, many of us experienced caregivers ourselves who have successfully adopted the techniques we teach."

The six-week class meets once a week for two and one-half hours. Convenient day and evening classes are available. Participants develop their own personalized action plans and goals as they cover a variety of topics, including:

\*Tools to help reduce stress

\*How to communicate effectively with other family members, their doctor, and service providers

\*The importance of self care  
\*How to reduce guilt, anger and depression  
\*Relaxation techniques  
\*How to approach tough decisions

St. Aidan's Episcopal Church in Gresham, Oregon, recently hosted the program's pilot class. "Testing the model and incorporating our team's high degree of skill and knowledge of care giving has provided an exciting laboratory for all involved," adds Congleton.

Participants also were very enthusiastic with the results. Edythe Hansen, whose husband has Alzheimer's, was battling guilt and depression that caring for a loved one can bring. "As I look back, I realize I was on the verge of depression," state Hansen. "By taking this class, I now take care of myself by doing for myself. I've learned how to retain and balance my hobbies and the joys of living with taking excellent care of my husband."

Registration for the April/May series is required by April 3, 1998.

For specific dates, times and locations to register for the Portland area classes, call 503-335-3500. For classes outside Portland, call 503-413-7032.

for loved ones with stroke, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's Disease. Participants

## Fight The Fear: Self-Defense For Every Woman

Join us for the next Fight The Fear self-defense classes for women and teen girls. Located at One With Heart in Southeast Portland, Saturday workshops are held 11am-4pm and full six-week courses meet Mondays and Wednesdays from 7:30-9pm.

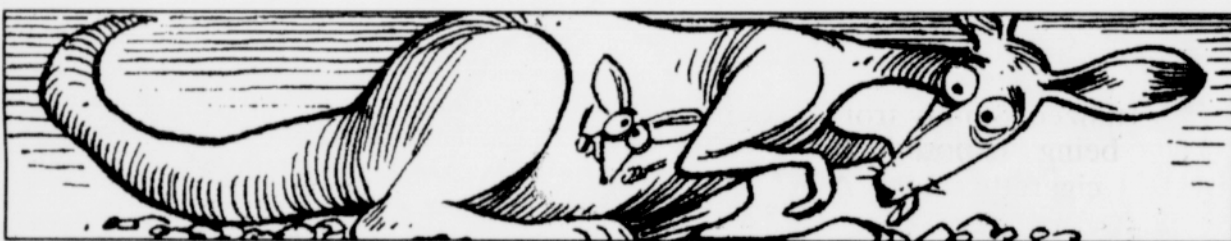
In the classes, girls and women learn practical physical and verbal self-defense skills taught by certified women's self-defense instructors. Also learn strategies for preventing threats to your personal safety as well as information about assailant's pre-assaultive behavior.

The next workshop will be held Saturday, May 30th.

The next 6 week course begins March 30th.

For more information please contact Antonia or Michelle,

One With Heart Physical Fitness With Purpose, 231-1999



A female kangaroo will not give birth to a joey (baby), if she has an older joey still in the pouch. Once the older joey leaves the pouch (usually within 8 months), the kangaroo will give birth within a day.

## Tobacco-tax increase helps Oregon

As the Oregon Health Plan begins its fifth year this month, it is preparing to bring an estimated 27,700 pregnant women, college students, and children and teenagers under Medicaid coverage financed by a 1996 voter approved increase in the state tobacco tax.

These new Oregon Health Plan members will join about 335,000 current members and increase the

share of state residents with health insurance, now about 89%. The health plan's Medicaid program covers both Oregonians on public assistance and the working poor.

These are scheduled changes in Medicaid coverage, all financed by the tobacco tax increase:

\*Beginning March 1, an estimated 1,800 additional pregnant

women will be eligible for the health plan. To qualify, a pregnant woman and her family could have an income of up to \$22,661, or 170% of the federal poverty level.

\*Since Jan. 1, an estimated 1,700 college students from low-income families have been eligible for the health plan if they qualify for federal Pell Grants and have been uninsured for at

least six months.

\*In July, up to 16,800 children will become eligible for the health plan as a result of the federal Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, which Congress authorized to deliver coverage to more low-income children. Another 7,400 children and their families who already qualify for the health plan, but don't currently participate, also are expected to enroll.

## 300,000 Oregonians will Breathe Easier May 30th

### 8th Annual "Reach the Beach" Clean Air Bicycle Challenge

The American Lung Association of Oregon is holding its 8th annual "Reach the Beach" Clean Air Bicycle Challenge on **Saturday, May 30, 1998**. Participants form the beginner to the seasoned cyclist are invited to join an expected 1500 Northwesters on one of four different bicycle routes through breathtaking scenery. Thanks to the support of our presenting sponsor, Portland

General Electric, and other sponsors, this year's *Reach the Beach* promises to be another great day for families, neighbors, corporate teams, and friends old and new. Proceeds support medical research and programs benefiting 300,000 Oregonians with asthma and other lung disease, and help ensure healthy air for future generations.

Riders can choose a route—start-

ing from Portland, Salem, Amity, or Grand Ronde—to best fit their ability. Courses wind through lush Willamette Valley farms and vineyards and the majestic coast range forest. **The Grand Ronde route covers terrain especially for mountain bikers.** Rest stops with food, water, and medical and mechanical services support participants along the way. All the routes end in Pacific

City, where beautiful Cape Kiwanda and Haystack Rock are the backdrop to a finish festival with food and entertainment.

Biking isn't the only way to join the fun. Volunteers are welcome to help make the event a great success again this year. For more information, call the Lung Association at 503-246-1997 or 1-800-LUNG-USA in Oregon.

### Teen Tobacco Facts:

1. Joe Camel may be on the way out, but his deadly legacy remains. Since the Joe campaign started in 1988, Camel's share of the illegal children's market increased from one-half percent (0.5) to 32.8 percent. ("The U.S. Surgeon General's report for kids about smoking.")
2. Each day another 3,000 young persons become smokers, according to Dr. David Kessler, former commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.
3. In 1996, approximately 28% of 11th-grade students in Oregon considered themselves smokers. Most smokers start before they are 18 (from an Oregon Health Division survey).
4. Currently, 30% of smokers say they started by the age of 15 (from an Oregon Health Division survey).
5. More than 6,000 Oregonians die each year from tobacco-related diseases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.
6. 61,340 Oregon children currently under age 18 will die prematurely from tobacco-related disease. (CDC projection)
7. 23.6% of 11 grade boys in Oregon currently use smokeless tobacco. (1996 Oregon Public School Drug Use Survey)
8. Half of all adolescent smokers and one quarter of adolescent nonsmokers own at least one promotional item from a tobacco company. (1992 Gallup Survey)

### European Flower Reduces Wrinkles

On the sun-drenched fields of Spain, European dermatologists have found a rare flower that has remarkable skin smoothing powers. It's a special strain of a chamomile flower that's unusually rich in three components—Levomenol, flavonoids and essential oils.

Clinical studies have shown that this European chamomile can dramatically reduce fine lines and wrinkles. Example: A recent study, conducted under controlled protocol at the Dermatological Clinic of the University of Bonn, Germany, revealed specific smoothing effects of the chamomile on skin which had been damaged by UV radiation.

Is this the world's best kept beauty secret? For more information and a sample, contact Paul Ross at 1-800-226-6227 extension 102.

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