

Osteoporosis: The silent bone thief and how to fight against it

Osteoporosis is a “silent” deterioration of bone and a major health threat for more than 28 million Americans (80% are women). This disease can progress for years without awareness. Bones become fragile and are more likely to break. The first sign of a problem may be a fractured bone or a collapsed vertebra.

Any bone can be affected, but fractures of the hip and spine have the most serious consequences. A hip fracture requires hospitalization and major surgery. The victim may be unable to walk unassisted and may experience permanent disability. Spinal or verte-

bral fractures may cause loss of height, severe back pain, spinal deformity, and stooped posture.

Bones aren't as hard and lifeless as they seem. They are constantly being torn down and built up to make calcium available for the body to function. As people age, bones begin to break down faster than they build up. If more calcium is taken from the bones than they are producing, bones become weak and break easily. This leads to osteoporosis.

Risk factors for the disease include: being female, thin and/or small frame, advanced age, a family history of osteo-

porosis, post-menopausal, anorexia nervosa or bulimia, a diet low in calcium, use of certain medications, such as corticosteroids and anti-convulsants, low testosterone levels in men, an inactive lifestyle, cigarette smoking, and excessive use of alcohol.

A bone density test can detect osteoporosis before a fracture occurs and may help predict your chances of a bone fracture in the future. This test can also help monitor bone loss.

In women, bone loss accelerates after menopause, when the ovaries stop producing estrogen. The FDA has approved

four medications for postmenopausal women to prevent or treat osteoporosis: estrogens, alendronate, calcitonin, and raloxifene.

Although there's no cure for osteoporosis, the disease can be prevented through a balanced diet rich in calcium, participation in weight-bearing exercise and a healthy lifestyle. People unable to get enough

calcium in their diet need to take a supplement.

Recommended calcium intakes: Adult women, 50-64 taking estrogen = 1,000 mg.; not taking estrogen = 1,500 mg.; 65+ years = 1,500 mg. Adult men, 25-64 = 1,000 mg., 65+ = 1,500 mg.

Source: OSU Extension Service, Columbia County

Don't overlook stretching in exercise

The most overlooked component of an exercise routine is flexibility and stretching. Flexibility relates to the range of motion of a particular joint and is different for all joints. You can have good shoulder flexibility and poor hip flexibility. The flexibility of a particular joint depends on many things, such as tightness of the ligaments, tendons, muscles, and the shape and size of the bones in that particular joint. Good flexibility involves being able to stretch, bend, and twist, without any stiffness, aching, or pain.

Flexibility decreases with age, which is why it's important to spend time working on flexibility by doing simple stretches daily. You are never too old to work on increasing flexibility.

Stretching can help normal activities of daily living become easier, such as reaching up to get something from a shelf, or getting up and down from the floor or chair.

Stretches that work the upper body and lower body are essential. Stretches can be done before or after an exercise routine, or on their own. You should always do some warm-up before stretching. Stretching a muscle that hasn't been warmed up could cause an injury. Stretches can be done in the morning, after sitting for long periods of time, or any other time, as long as a quick warm-up is done prior to stretching.

Stretches should be held for 20-30 seconds, but if that is too

long, try holding each stretch for 10-15 seconds and then do the stretch again. The longer you can hold a stretch, up to 30 seconds, without bouncing, the more effective it is. Stretches should not cause any pain, but you should be able to feel a slight pull. Remember to relax and breathe. Stretch both sides of your body equally as well. Include stretches for your shoulders, arms, wrists, back, thighs, calves, hands, and neck. These activities are good for getting the blood pumping – making you feel energized and less tense.

If you aren't sure which stretches to do, there are many websites with pictures. Make sure the website is from a reputable organization, hospital, or university to find stretches and avoid unsafe ones.

Source: Melissa Bess, Regional Nutrition and Health Specialist, University of Missouri Extension

Two free health chats scheduled

Two free Evening Chats on health topics are scheduled for March at Tuality Health Center.

Dealing with Dizziness and Balance Problems will be the topic of a 90-minute presentation on Tuesday, March 18, at 6:00 p.m.

Dizziness is a chief complaint in approximately eight million physician visits each year. Symptoms are often described as vertigo, dizziness, spinning, lightheadedness, swimming sensations, nausea, giddiness, or feeling off-balance.

Pinky Parekh, PT, licensed physical therapist will discuss causes of dizziness, tips to prevent falls, and physical therapy

options that are available.

On Thursday, March 20, the topic will be Diabetes Medications Update. This 90-minute presentation will start at 6:00 p.m.

Do you want to know how your diabetes medications work? Why do you need to take so many medications when you have diabetes? What new medications are available? Find answers to these and more to help maximize your blood sugar control.

Both will be at Tuality Health Education Center, 334 SE 8th Ave., Hillsboro. These are free presentations, however, those attending are asked to call 503-681-1700 to R.S.V.P.

Give blood & get a chance to win

Anyone who gives blood, between now and March 17, at the Red Cross Pacific Northwest Regional Blood Services will be entered to win a “Party In A Box” package for the Portland concert of The Wiggles, on Saturday, March 22, at 5:00 p.m. This package has been made possible by a partnership between Red Cross and Portland-based radio station Z100.

The “Party In A Box” winner and seven guests will enjoy snacks and beverages in a

Rose Garden Box Suite during the highly popular sing-a-long and dance-a-long show “Pop Go The Wiggles!”

Interested blood donors should call 1-800-GIVE LIFE to schedule a donation appointment. Blood donors must be at least 16 years old (with a signed Red Cross parental consent form), be in good general health, and weigh at least 110 pounds. More information is available at www.nwblood.redcross.org.

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