

## **10 Ways to Prevent or Reverse Osteoporosis.**

Half of all women will have osteoporosis by age 60. One in five women will have a hip fracture in her lifetime, and 50% of them will never walk again. Men are not immune to this problem. 30% of osteoporosis happens in males, and 50% of men who suffer hip fractures will die within one year.

### **A New Disease?**

Osteoporosis which is so prevalent now, was virtually unheard of a hundred years ago. It was a rarity until the turn-of-the-century. So what happened? Did our genes change in a hundred years?

No! Genetic material takes thousands of years to change. The only thing that changed was our environment. Our diet and lifestyle are much different than they were hundred years ago and it has caused an epidemic of osteoporosis. So, what do we do? How can we reverse this process?

### **Here are 10 ways you can prevent or reverse osteoporosis:**

#### **1) Stop the Pop!**

Carbonated beverages such as soft drinks, Champagne, and sparkling water leach calcium from your bones. A Harvard study on 16 to 20 year-old women showed that half of them were already showing bone loss as a result of excess soft drink intake. Carbonated beverages also have excess phosphates, which cause even more calcium loss.

#### **2) Cut down on Protein**

Excess protein intake causes acidity in the body, which in turn causes calcium to be lost in the urine. Most people need only two to 4 ounces of lean protein, three times a day. The average American diet contains two to three times this much.

#### **3) Keep Your Stomach Acid!**

Many people are on acid blocking drugs, such as Nexium, Protonix, Prevacid, Tagamet, and Zantac, for problems such as heartburn and hiatal hernia. Stomach acid is necessary to absorb minerals such as calcium, magnesium, and zinc. Blocking stomach acid significantly increases the risk of osteoporosis.

These drugs were meant to be used for six to eight weeks at a time, not for years at a time! In fact, most heartburn symptoms are not due to excess stomach acid. Two thirds of the patients on acid blocking agents have too **little** stomach acid, not too much!

#### **4) Cut out Caffeine!**

Each cup of coffee that you drink makes you lose 150 mg of calcium in your urine. Chemically decaffeinated coffee is not the answer either though, because it contains harmful chemicals that interfere with the detoxification process. Naturally decaffeinated teas are a better option, but if you must drink caffeinated coffee, at least increase your calcium intake by 150 mg for each cup you drink.

### **5) Get the Right Kind of Calcium**

Tums is one of the worst sources for calcium. In addition to being composed of calcium carbonate, which is a poorly absorbed form of calcium, it decreases the stomach acid even further. Calcium citrate and calcium hydroxyapatite are the best forms of calcium to take. They need to be taken on an empty stomach for best absorption, and only 500 mg at a time (that's all our bodies can absorb at one time). A total dose of 1000 to 1200 mg per day is adequate for most menopausal women.

### **6) Get Some Sun!**

Vitamin D deficiency is also epidemic in our society. Vitamin D helps to absorb calcium, and put it in the bones. It is also important for immune system modulation, depression, and autoimmune disorders. It is made in your skin when you get out in the sun. The farther you are from the equator, the less vitamin D you make in your skin. Most supplements contain 400 to 800 IU which is inadequate for most people in northern latitudes.

Since a skin cancer is such a concern, most people use sunscreen when they go out in the sun. Sunscreen blocks over 90% of your vitamin D production. But instead of putting yourself at risk for skin cancer, the best solution is to take supplements. Vitamin D levels can be measured by your physician, and the supplements can be titrated accordingly.

### **7) Have Your Hormones Checked**

Hormonal decline is one of the most common reasons for bone loss after menopause in women. Andropause, the male equivalent of menopause, also causes bone loss in men. Adequate levels of estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone are important for bone maintenance.

Excess levels of cortisol, insulin and parathyroid hormone can also cause bone loss. Most physicians never check for these levels. An elevated calcium level in the serum is a clue that parathyroid hormone might be in excess. Excess refined sugars and starches in the diet cause elevated insulin levels. Excess stress causes elevated cortisol levels.

### **8) Change Your Diet**

Excess refined sugars and starches, elevate your insulin levels and cause an increase in osteoporosis. The ideal diet is one called a "low glycemic index" diet. Glycemic index is

a measure of how quickly food turns into sugar in the bloodstream. Low glycemic index foods do not raise blood sugar or insulin levels quickly, and include lean proteins, beans, vegetables, and good fats (nuts, olives, olive oil, fish, fish oils, avocados).

Increasing fiber intake is an easy way to lower sugar and insulin levels. Fiber taken just before meals helps to slow down the absorption of sugars and fats, and can help lower cholesterol and blood sugar levels, as much as medication.

## **9) Reduce Stress**

Stress raises cortisol levels. If cortisol levels are high for long periods of time it can cause bone loss. Cortisol antagonizes insulin and leads to insulin resistance, eventually raising the blood sugar and causing calcium loss in the urine. As little as 25 teaspoons of sugar can cause calcium to be lost in the urine.

Stress reduction can include specific activities aimed at invoking the "relaxation response" such as yoga, tai chi, meditation, massage and prayer. It may also include getting more sleep, taking a vacation, getting psychotherapy to help with toxic relationships, and making an effort not to "burn the candle at both ends".

## **10) Exercise More**

When the muscles pull against the bones during exercise, it stimulates the bones and tells them that they are needed. Any weight-bearing exercise such as walking, bicycling, and weightlifting can increase bone density. As little as 15 to 30 minutes a day can be helpful.

Weightlifting does not need to be with heavy weights either, it can be with as little as 2 - 5 pound hand or ankle weights. Or you can use your own body weight and let gravity to do the job. Floor exercises such as leg lifts and sit ups, will work just fine. The important thing is to just get moving!