

OSTEOPOROSIS

Osteoporosis or “porous bone” affects more than 28 million men and women in the United States and is responsible for 1.5 million fractures each year. Education and awareness can make a difference, and appropriate intervention can prevent or slow disease progression. Although

Osteoporosis affects women more commonly than men; it is still a disease of both sexes.

Alterable risk factors which affect both men and women are:

- smoking which leads to rapid calcium loss
- inadequate diet, especially one low in calcium
- lack of exposure to the sun leading to insufficient levels of vitamin D which is necessary for the processing of calcium
- an imbalance of sodium or protein (too much of either can increase excretion of calcium)
- too much caffeine and/or alcohol (both cause diuresis which contributes to the excretion of calcium)
- lack of exercise (activity helps bones retain calcium)

For women, risk factors also include early menopause and decreased estrogen after menopause. Prevention of osteoporosis needs to begin in a person’s youth with a well-balanced diet that includes foods rich in calcium, physical activity and daily sun exposure to provide vitamin D. However prevention and treatment can begin at any age with positive results.

Dietary calcium. Suggested calcium intake for adult’s ages 51-65 has recently been increased from 800mg to 1200mg daily. For men and women over age 65, 1500mg per day is recommended. Yogurt, milk and cheese are well known sources of calcium. Other good sources are sardines, steamed oysters, and salmon.

Supplemental calcium. If unable to maintain an adequate dietary intake of calcium, supplemental calcium should be taken. Calcium citrate and calcium gluconate are recommended because they are highly soluble and more easily absorbed than calcium carbonate.

Vitamin D intake. Sun exposure for 10 to 15 minutes per day is usually sufficient. However one can also incorporate dietary sources of vitamin D. Good sources of vitamin D are fish, Swiss cheese, egg yolk, fortified margarine, and fortified milk.

Exercise. Weight-bearing and resistance exercises increase bone density. Walking, jogging, or dancing are good examples of weight bearing exercises. A minimum of 20 minutes of these types of exercises should be performed at least three times a week.