



Health Awareness

A Disease Many People Don't Know They Have

by Miriam Nelson, Ph.D.

(NAPSA)—Diet and exercise have countless benefits, but strong bones are not automatically one of them. Despite eating more vegetables and fewer fats, bone health is often neglected. People are living longer, but not necessarily stronger. Why is bone health suffering?



Dr. Nelson

In his report on bone health, the United States Surgeon

General pointed out that many don't eat or exercise well enough to avoid the common bone-destroying disease known as osteoporosis. There are 10 million people suffering from it now and about twice that number are at risk. Many don't realize the danger. Weak bones are invisible, and a broken bone is usually the first sign of trouble.

The good news is that osteoporosis can be prevented and there are simple actions that everyone can take to help protect themselves:

- Get enough daily calcium

with vitamin D

- Do the right kind of exercise several times a week

Q: What's the easiest way to avoid osteoporosis?

A: A balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D is the first step. Eat at least three servings of nonfat or low-fat dairy products like milk, cheese or yogurt every day. Nondairy calcium sources such as tofu, almonds and green-leafy vegetables are also good choices.

Q: What exercises help build strong bones?

A. Weight-bearing exercises and resistance training are two different types of exercise that improve bone health. Walking, jogging, aerobics, stair climbing and sports like tennis are all good examples of weight-bearing exercises. Weight lifting or strength training are resistance exercises. Don't be intimidated about starting or expanding your fitness routine. Your bones and overall health depend upon you taking steps to become more physically active. If you are not ready to join a fitness center, start exercising at home—whatever works for you is what is best. Try working out with a

buddy to help boost confidence and keep you motivated. Or get a trainer to help you out with a couple of sessions.

Q: What about calcium supplements? Do I need one? What kind should I take?

A: Unless you get three servings or more of calcium rich dairy foods every day, you should consider taking a calcium and vitamin D supplement. Calcium citrate and calcium carbonate are the two most readily available forms. I prefer a calcium citrate supplement such as Citracal® that can be taken at any time of day or night, with or without food. Research has shown a reduction in osteoporosis with calcium citrate supplementation.

Q: How much calcium should you get each day?

A: Men and women ages 25 to 50 need 1,000 mg per day and those over age 50 need 1,200 mg per day. Most get only half their daily requirement from food.

Share this information with family and friends and help put the focus on prevention.

• *Dr. Nelson is the author of the "Strong Women" book series. Citracal® is a product of the Mission Pharmacal Company.*