

WOMEN'S HEALTH TRENDS


Bones, Bones, Bones The More You Care, The Less They Wear!

(NAPSA)—Osteoporosis can cause more than physical effects. In fact, osteoporosis—a silent disease that causes bones to become more porous—can lead to feelings of helplessness, lack of confidence or loss of independence. That's because as the disease progresses and bones become thinner and weaker, you can break a bone from a minor injury. A fall or excessive strain on your back can increase your risk for broken bones. This can lead to pain, height loss, restricted mobility or a humped back. These physical changes can have a significant impact on your outlook on life.

The good news is, if osteoporosis is detected early enough, its effects may be prevented. To help protect yourself from the dangers of osteoporosis, it is important to talk to your doctor about your risk for osteoporosis and whether a bone density test is right for you. A bone density test is a way to help your doctor measure the health of your bones. It may also be used to monitor your rate of bone loss and response to therapy. A bone density test is a quick, painless and easy procedure.

"Today, women have options. If a woman knows she has low bone mass or osteoporosis, she can discuss ways to prevent further bone

loss or treatments to increase bone mass and reduce fracture risk," advises Ethel Siris, M.D., director of the Toni Stabile Osteoporosis Center of the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York.

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Although exercise, calcium, vitamin D and lifestyle changes are all important, they may not be enough to prevent or treat osteoporosis. The most valuable first step is to get a bone density test. If you are diagnosed with osteoporosis, work with your physician to find a treatment option that is right for you.

In addition to getting a bone density test, there are a number of things you can do to protect yourself:

- **Get regular exercise**—Weight-bearing exercises that increase bone and muscle strength and improve flexibility help protect bones against fracture. Before

starting any exercise program, you should first talk with your doctor.

- **Ensure an adequate intake of calcium and vitamin D**—Calcium is important to keep your bones strong. The best source of calcium is food; however, if you can't get enough calcium from food, you can take supplements. Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium.

- **Prevent accidents to avoid injury**—Make your home safe by getting rid of hazards. Use caution when lifting, bending or reaching.

- **Avoid factors that further weaken bones**—Medications, including some steroids, such as hydrocortisone or prednisone, can increase bone loss. Ask your doctor about side effects of your medications. Inactivity, smoking, or drinking too much alcohol can also weaken your bones.

- **Take action**—Talk to your doctor about treatment options that can help strengthen your bones. While there is no cure for osteoporosis, there are a number of medications available by prescription including estrogens, bisphosphonates, calcitonin and selective estrogen receptor modulators (SERMs).

To learn more about osteoporosis, call 1-800-950-6724 or visit the Web site, www.bonedensitytest.com.