

# HEALTH Q&A

## Bone Basics

by David S. McLaughlin, M.D.

(NAPSA)—Q: I am a 55-year-old woman diagnosed with osteoporosis five years ago. Recently I suffered a fracture due to a fall. I was surprised that such a light fall could cause so much damage. This is my first osteoporosis-related fracture. I'm very concerned because my doctor explained that after an initial osteoporosis-related fracture, the likelihood of my suffering another is fairly high. What can I do to prevent this? Are there any advances in osteoporosis treatment that I should be aware of?

A: Your doctor is right in telling you that you are likely to suffer another fracture. Once a fracture occurs, osteoporosis may quickly progress. Consider this: women with osteoporosis who have two or more previous fractures have up to a nine times greater risk of future fracture and one in five women will endure an additional fracture within the first year of suffering a spinal fracture.

Osteoporosis is a serious condition, particularly at midlife. In fact, an estimated 10 million Americans, 80 percent of them women, who suffer from osteoporosis are at increased risk of bone fractures in the spine, wrist, and hip.

The good news is that there have recently been significant strides in osteoporosis treatment. Until now, all drugs approved to treat osteoporosis have only worked to slow or stop bone loss but not to stimulate new bone growth.

In November 2002, the U.S.



**New medication helps build new bone.**

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a new class of drug called bone formation agents (or parathyroid hormone- PTH) that work primarily to stimulate new bone and can help reduce the risk of further fracture. Forteo was approved for the treatment of osteoporosis in postmenopausal women who are at high risk for a fracture or who have a history of osteoporosis-related fractures. The drug carries a special warning because in laboratory tests teriparatide caused cancerous bone tumors in rats. The tumors, however, have not been seen in the more than 2,000 people who tested the drug in trials.

While there is yet no cure, you can take steps to treat osteoporosis. I encourage you to work closely with your physician to determine your best treatment strategy.

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