Health Awareness
Ask the Doctor: Osteoporosis

(NAPS)—Are you one of the eight million women with osteoporosis? If so, you probably don’t spend much time thinking about it. In fact, you may not even know you have it. This notoriously “silent disease” often goes unnoticed until a bone break or fracture occurs. Osteoporosis is responsible for more than one million fractures every year, which typically occur at the hip, spine, and wrist. These fractures can have devastating consequences, including considerable pain and disability, and sometimes even death. Now is the time to protect yourself from the life-threatening consequences of osteoporosis-related bone fractures. Understanding its symptoms, prevention, and new developments in treatment is an important first step in protecting your overall bone health.

Dr. Felicia Cosman, Professor of Clinical Medicine, Columbia University answers questions about osteoporosis.

Can osteoporosis be prevented? Unfortunately, it is difficult to completely rebuild bone once it is weakened by osteoporosis. However, you may implement some preventive measures that can help reduce your bone loss at any stage in life. These include making sure you get enough calcium and vitamin D through food or vitamins, engaging in regular weight-bearing activities, and avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol consumption. In addition, regular bone mineral density (BMD) tests are important to help detect whether you have osteoporosis before a fracture occurs as well as to predict your future likelihood of breaking a bone.

What’s new in osteoporosis treatment? The goal of treatment is to strengthen bones, which in turn helps reduce the risk of fractures.

A new once-yearly treatment is available to treat postmenopausal osteoporosis.

There are two main types of therapies your healthcare provider may recommend you take to treat your osteoporosis: drugs that stop the loss of bone and drugs that promote the growth of bone. Therapies that stop the loss of bone include bisphosphonates (commonly known as Fosamax®, Actonel®, and Boniva®), selective estrogen receptor modulators (Evista®) and, calcitonin (Miacalcin®). Parathyroid hormone (Forteo®) is a type of therapy that encourages the growth of bone.

Bisphosphonates are the most commonly prescribed treatment for osteoporosis. Until very recently most of these therapies required that you take pills on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. These pills have to be taken on an empty stomach with a full glass of water first thing in the morning and require that you remain upright for 30 to 60 minutes. Due to the busy lives that many women lead, it can become difficult to remember to take the pills at the designated time.

In fact, research shows more than half of women who take daily or weekly bisphosphonate pills stop treatment by the end of one year, which puts them at greater risk for breaking a bone. And for women who continue these pills about half of the time, research shows they experience only a small benefit in preventing fractures as compared to taking the pills regularly.

Now there is a treatment option available that provides the opportunity to only think about your osteoporosis treatment once a year. The FDA has recently approved the first and only once-yearly therapy for the treatment of postmenopausal osteoporosis. Called Reclast® (zoledronic acid) Injection, this treatment is given as a single 15 minute IV infusion by a healthcare care professional, eliminating the need for daily, weekly or monthly pills and reminders.

Reclast has been shown to be effective in strengthening bones and protecting against all types of osteoporosis-related fractures, including the hip, spine and non-spine (i.e., hip, wrist, arm, leg, rib). A study of more than 7,000 women with postmenopausal osteoporosis showed a 70 percent reduction in spine fractures and a 41 percent reduction in hip fractures.

In addition to the potential benefits of any new medication, you should be aware of the potential side effects. If you are taking Reclast and experience some of these symptoms, it is important to alert your healthcare provider immediately.

To find out if Reclast is right for you, please speak to your healthcare provider. For additional information about osteoporosis, you can log onto the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF) Web site at www.nof.org. For additional information specifically about Reclast, log onto www.reclast.com.

Health Awareness: A New Once-Yearly Treatment Is Available to Treat Postmenopausal Osteoporosis

Kids Bring Popular Television Characters Home This Season With New Video Games From Disney Interactive Studios

(NAPS)—Video games are expected to be among the hottest gifts this season. In fact, U.S. retail sales for the December holiday season alone, holiday shoppers helped boost U.S. video gaming industry sales to $3.7 billion, according to MINIC. If you’re like a growing number of parents, you may want your children can enjoy—with content you approve. This season, you got plenty of options to choose from with a new lineup of video games that bring your favorite characters to life. Here’s a look at a few new releases from Disney Interactive Studios.

• Get Your Kicks—Celebrating the hit TV series “Power Rangers,” fans play the parts of their favorite heroes in an action-packed adventure with Power Rangers: Super Legends. Players battle enemies, solve puzzles, and explore an interactive world, using martial arts and gravity-defying aerial combos. The game is rated “E-10+” for everyone 10 and older and is available on Nintendo DS, PlayStation 2 and PC.

• Sing Their Praises—The Cheetah Girls: Pop Star Sensations is a new music-based adventure game for Cheetah Girls fans. As the Cheetah circle stars on the Nintendo DS, Gamers use the handheld’s touch screen to interact with the characters, dance with the stylus and sing along to official ‘Cheetah Girls’ songs. Players can also use the role of fashion stylist, selecting new outfits for the girls and sharing them with friends. The Cheetah Girls: Pop Star Sensations is rated “E” for everyone.

• Spy Games—Based on the popular Disney Channel series, The Suite Life of Zack & Cody: Circle of Spies lets players assume the roles of their favorite characters from the show, cool gadgets, and new personali-

Is Buying A Home In Today’s Economy A Good Idea?

(NAPS)—As a long-term investment, homeownership is still one of the best investments for individuals.

“Why?” you may ask. After all, the overall housing market is down and out, with defaults rising at an alarming rate, and home sales dropping so far, it seems that buyers can’t get a home loan at any price. What’s left to realize is that housing markets, like all markets, inevitably have high and low periods. And homeownership has a track record that is virtually unmatched by any other purchase in terms of its real benefits.

Despite the turmoil in mortgage lending, if you have good credit, a job and steady income, you will find there is still plenty of mortgage credit to be had at good rates. For well-qualified buyers, interest rates are running near historical lows. Homeownership’s Real Value

Here are a few examples of why, dollar for dollar, homeownership is a solid step in your national level, home appreciation has historically increased 5.6 percent annually in recent years, according to the National Association of Home Builders.

Five percent may not seem much at first, but here’s an example of how it will put it in perspective: Say you put 10 percent down on a $200,000 house, for an investment of $20,000. At a 5 percent annual appreciation rate, that $200,000 home would increase in value $10,000 during the first year. An increase of $11,500. The median home price in 1996 was $140,000. Today, that same home would have gained nearly $100,000 in value.

In contrast, putting that $20,000 down payment into the stock market and getting a 5 percent gain would only yield a $1,000 gain.

Homeownership is still by far the single-largest creator of wealth for many Americans. 

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HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS:

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