

OSTEOPOROSIS: RISKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many things you can do to create an environment which makes you less prone to osteoporosis. The goal is to provide the right environment for your body to maintain good bone health. Diet, nutritional supplementation, exercise and lifestyle changes can all decrease your risk for developing osteoporosis.

Who is at risk? Several factors predispose a woman to osteoporosis:

- ❑ Genetics: First-degree relatives of women who have osteoporosis tend to have lower bone mass when compared with women who do not have a family history of osteoporosis.
- ❑ Lack of adequate calcium and vitamin D: Needs for calcium change with age, and those who do not increase calcium during and after menopause may not get adequate amounts. While calcium is not the only player in bone health, it is the major bone mineral and vitamin D is needed for its activation.
- ❑ High animal protein diets: Diets high in animal protein create a more acidic environment which leads to bone loss. Plant proteins (like those found in nuts and legumes) do not seem to do this.
- ❑ Smoking: Women who smoke lose bone faster than those who don't.
- ❑ Alcohol: Drinking 7 ounces or more a week has been shown to increase the risk of falls and hip fractures.
- ❑ Hormonal factors: Those who enter menopause prematurely (before age 40), had late menarche or periods of infrequent menses are at greater risk of bone loss.

Nutritional Recommendations:

- ❑ Eat a diet that is more alkaline. Having an alkaline (higher) pH will protect your body from bone breakdown. Helpful foods are: molasses, raisins, figs, beans, broccoli, beets, carrots and almonds. Avoid a diet high in animal products as they create a more acidic environment which tends to break down bone. Acid-forming foods include: chicken, beef, lamb, walnuts, and lentils.
- ❑ Protein: Limit your protein to 1 gram per 3.8 pounds of body weight. High protein creates more ash which is acidic and leads to bone turnover.
- ❑ DO NOT drink carbonated beverages. This increases phosphorus which increases calcium loss.
- ❑ DO increase leafy greens. They contain many vitamins and minerals for good bone health.
- ❑ DO increase calcium-rich foods including nuts, broccoli, yogurt and cheese (especially Gouda and mozzarella). You can supplement with mixed forms of calcium—the more expensive but more absorbable calcium citrate, lactate or gluconate. The less expensive less absorbable calcium carbonate requires more stomach acid (which is often lacking in

many people, especially older women.) . Total food and supplemented calcium should equal 600-1200 mg/day.

- Limit sugar: Excessive sugar as refined carbohydrates has been linked to bone loss.
- Take a good bone health formula that contains such important bone minerals as calcium, vitamin D (400-1000 IU), boron (2 mg), manganese, and silica (1 mg.)

Other very helpful supplements which may be recommended are: Vitamin A (20,000 IU), B12 (1000 mcg/week), magnesium, folate (5 mg), , zinc (20-40 mg), and copper (3 mg.)

Lifestyle recommendations:

- Exercise: Walk briskly beginning with 10 minutes four times weekly for two weeks and then increase by 5 minutes every two weeks until you reach 30 minutes four times weekly.
- Smoking and drinking caffeinated and alcoholic beverages can increase calcium excretion. Avoiding these activities are great for your overall health and for preventing osteoporosis.

Though you can't control your genetics, be encouraged that there is much you can do to prevent osteoporosis. Encourage the young women you know to adopt these helpful ways of eating and exercising as you model them. Good bone health is a result of good choices.