

understanding and preventing osteoporosis



Although adequate calcium helps prevent osteoporosis, adults should also include vitamin D in their diet. Vitamin D is found in eggs, fatty fish, cereal, and even some supplements. It is necessary for the body to absorb calcium. Research shows people are not getting enough vitamin D, so talk to your physician about the best way to get more of it in your daily diet. A vitamin D supplement might be the most viable option.

Most adults remember when their mothers insisted they drink their milk. While many of us may have objected, as adults we now realize Mom was doing her best to help us build and maintain strong bones. Those who didn't listen may now find themselves among the 44 million Americans whom the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF) estimates live with osteoporosis, a condition that weakens bones and increases the risk of unexpected fractures.

We know, of course, that milk alone won't prevent osteoporosis, but dairy products contain calcium, an essential nutrient for bone health. According to the NOF, getting an early start is especially important, because 85-90 percent of adult bone mass is acquired by the late teens. These figures may not inspire kids to pour themselves a glass of milk, but having a better understanding of osteoporosis and its potentially debilitating effects may help prevent it.

According to Dr. Joseph P. Falcone of Williamsville, osteoporosis is often viewed as a condition that only affects little old ladies. While most common in older women, anyone can develop it. In fact, nearly half of all women and a quarter of men over 50 will break a bone because of osteoporosis. Dr. Falcone also says that, "When discussing osteoporosis, it's best to first be aware of osteopenia, a silent condition that precedes osteoporosis, often robbing bones of their strength."

Osteopenia is related to bone mineral density (BMD) or the levels of minerals in the bones. When BMD is low, a person is said to have osteopenia, which can gradually become osteoporosis. The worst part is that osteopenia often goes unnoticed and has no physical signs—even in the most physically active people. The first warning sign could be a fractured bone. Dr. Falcone adds, "By the time a person has osteoporosis their bones have weakened and thinned, making them highly susceptible to fracture. A person with osteoporosis can even break a bone from lifting a bag of groceries! Tasks that might otherwise seem trivial, can pose a risk to someone with osteoporosis."

The good news is that osteoporosis can often be prevented. Parents should encourage children to drink milk and eat dairy products, preferably low fat versions; dark green leafy vegetables, and calcium-fortified orange juice. Also, routine exercise helps strengthen bones and muscles to prevent bone loss. Walking or jogging three to four times a week are great weight-bearing exercises, and help prevent the disease. Strength and balance exercises also help decrease the risk of broken bones due to falling.

May is National Osteoporosis month and Empire Orthopedics and Windsong Radiology have developed a brochure about osteoporosis awareness and screening available at www.empireorthopedics.com and www.windsongradiology.com. To learn more about osteoporosis, visit the National Osteoporosis Foundation at www.nof.org. TF115837

WNY RESOURCE:

Joseph P. Falcone, MD, DO
55 Spindrift Drive, Suite 120, Williamsville, NY 14221
716-632-1212

Windsong Radiology
55 Spindrift, Williamsville, NY 14221
716-631-2500