



# HOW **NOT** TO GET OSTEOPOROSIS

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Be aware that your bones are living tissue—inside their hard surface they are spongy and have a blood and lymph supply as well as nerves. Your body is constantly making new bone tissue while reabsorbing old bone tissue. Osteoporosis is sometimes called “porous bones” and it is actually caused when you can’t make new bone tissue fast enough to replace the bone tissue you are losing.

Osteoporosis is not your Grandma’s disease, it affects men, too. At least 300,000 men in the U.S. suffer an osteoporotic fracture each year. Women can lose as much as 20 percent of their bone mass in the five to seven years after menopause.

## **1. GET A BONE DENSITY TEST**

Women should talk to their doctor about a bone density test when menstruation stops or becomes irregular. Anyone (male or female) who is at risk should also consider tests (measured through urinalysis) that check bone remodeling biomarkers.

## **2. WEIGHT-BEARING EXERCISE IS YOUR NUMBER ONE WEAPON**

Exercise, and in particular, weight-bearing exercise, is instrumental to the creation of new bone tissue. Cells within the bone sense the stress of this type of exercise and respond by making bones stronger and denser. Walking, dancing, jogging, stair-climbing, rowing, tennis, hiking . . . these are all weight-bearing activities but none of them are as effective as weight lifting. No matter how old or out of shape you are, “pumping iron” will make you stronger and improve your bone health.

## **7. GET SOME SUN!**

When the levels of calcium in your blood drop, your body responds by converting vitamin D into its active form, which travels to the intestines to encourage greater calcium absorption to minimize calcium loss in the urine. A half hour of bright sunlight every day can provide your body with its Vitamin D needs, but for added protection we recommend everyone take 700 to 800 International Units (IU) of vitamin D a day.

## **8. TAKE VITAMIN K**

Vitamin K has been shown to regulate calcium, keeping it in your bones and out of your arteries, which helps prevent both osteoporosis and heart attacks. If you eat one or more servings of dark-green leafy vegetables a day you probably get enough vitamin K but maybe not—some recent studies suggest there isn’t as much vitamin K in these veggies as once thought.

### **3. WALKING IS NOT ENOUGH**

Walking alone won't increase bone density though it might serve to maintain it. Canadian research has found resistance training and agility exercises can greatly cut an elderly person's fall risk. Using a variety of tests and risk models, the researchers estimated that the risk of a fall dropped 57.3 percent among strength training participants and 47.5 percent among those who did agility exercises. The stretching group saw a 20.2 percent reduction in fall risk.

### **4. DRINK LESS COFFEE**

If you drink more than three cups of coffee a day, cut back. Excess coffee makes causes acids in the bloodstream which you body tries to neutralize by drawing calcium from your bones. The sad result is you are urinating away some of your calcium reserve.

### **5. WATCH THE PROTEIN**

The same phenomenon above is true if your diet is too high in protein. You should only eat meat, fish or chicken once a day.

### **6. YOU NEED MORE THAN CALCIUM**

Study after study (including the recent Women's Health Initiative study) show that a high intake of calcium through dairy products or supplements does not reduce the development of osteoporosis or incidents of fractures in elderly people. A small amount of calcium up to 250 milligrams a day can provide a slight increase in bone density particularly if combined with Vitamin D, but too consumption interferes with calcium absorption and results in weaker bones, calcium deposits, bone spurs, and kidney stones. Even more frightening, excess calcium has been linked with prostate cancer in men and ovarian cancer in women.

### **9. CONSIDER MAGNESIUM, POTASSIUM AND SILICA SUPPLEMENTS**

The minerals magnesium, potassium and silica are all converted inside the body to calcium. In countries like Peru, India and Japan average daily calcium intake is as low as 300 mg/day, yet the incidence of bone fractures is also quite low. Guess what, their diets are high in these three minerals. Therefore, it might be wise of you to take a magnesium/potassium supplement as well as a supplement of horse-tail, which is the best source of silica.

### **10. ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY**

The shortage of estrogen in post menopausal women and testosterone in older men is a major factor in osteoporosis, so why not replace them if you can do so without creating other serious medical problems?

### **11. DON'T SMOKE, DRINK MODERATELY, AND SKIP THE COLA**

Researchers using CAT scans have found that smokers (male and female—young and old) have less bone density in the spine, hip, and body as a whole than that found in their non-smoking peers. It has been long known that heavy drinking of alcoholic beverages reduces the ability of the body's cells to make bones. We now know that drinking cola—diet or regular—is also associated with reduced bone density.