

To Your Health Newsletter

“Promoting Good Health Through Information”

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System

Patient Education Newsletter • Fall 2009

Osteoporosis & Your Bones: Make Them or Break Them!

Hank Winkenwerder, PT

Did you know that 10 percent of your skeleton is under construction right now?

Bone cells are living tissue like skin and are constantly (though more slowly) being replaced in the body. If you lose more bone than you grow, bones become weak and brittle and may break with a minor fall or even a hard sneeze.

This disease is called osteoporosis and at least 10 million Americans have it. Usually we think of osteoporosis as a disease of older post-menopausal women. But men make up between 20 and 30 percent of patients. It tends to strike men at a later age as their protective sex hormone (testosterone) declines.

It can be a serious problem, causing hip fractures which may require major surgery. The spine and wrist are also at risk. Osteoporosis cost 19 billion dollars in medical care of fractures in 1995. In 2005, osteoporosis was the culprit in over two million fractures.

What can you do to minimize your risk? Quite simply, live a healthy lifestyle to encourage bone growth and repair. If you drink more than two alcoholic drinks a day, you increase your risk of osteoporosis. Smoking can slow new bone cell growth down a lot – one more reason to quit now! Limiting protein and salt may also help. There is no hard evidence linking caffeine to osteoporosis yet, but the phosphates in sugary soda such as cola may increase risk.

Eat a healthy diet with plenty of calcium rich foods – milk, nuts, and a number of vegetables. People over 50 years old should get at least 1200 milligrams of calcium per day.

Bone grows in response to good stress, so weight-bearing exercise (biking, walking, weight-lifting) helps encourage stronger bones. Swimming, though good aerobic exercise, does not give enough gravity resistance to help. Remember how the space station astronauts had to run on treadmills to keep strong in weightless space?

Lastly, follow your provider's good advice. They are well aware that certain medications (cortisone, some blood thinners) and diseases (diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, etc) may make you more or less prone to osteoporosis. The provider may recommend Vitamin D, calcium supplements or hormone replacement. A painless specialized x-ray scan (DXA) may be performed if necessary to determine if you have osteoporosis and need more intensive measures.

Exercise, eat right and avoid risks and you may have little to fear, but sticks and stones. These words will never hurt you.

Recipe for Health

Chillin' out pasta salad

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup flour
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 cup 1% fat buttermilk
- 1 egg, whole
- 1/4 cup tub margarine
- 1 tsp vegetable oil (to grease baking pan)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. Mix together cornmeal, flour, sugar, and baking powder.
3. In another bowl, combine buttermilk and egg. Beat lightly.
4. Slowly add buttermilk and egg mixture to dry ingredients.
5. Add margarine, and mix by hand or with mixer for 1 minute.
6. Bake for 20–25 minutes in an 8- by 8-inch, greased baking dish
7. Cool. Cut into 10 squares.

Health Information:

Yield: 10 servings

Serving Size: 1 square

Each Serving Provides:

Calories: 178

Total Fat: 6 g

Saturated Fat: 1 g

Cholesterol: 22 mg

Sodium: 94 mg

Total fiber: 1 g

Protein: 4 g

Carbohydrates: 27 g

Potassium: 132

www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Staying Fit on a Budget – The Low-Budget Exercise

Alisa Krinsky, MS, CTRS, RTC and Terry Catania, RTA

Many people cannot afford to buy gym equipment or join a fancy health club to lose weight or to maintain a healthy lifestyle. With a little imagination, one can exercise with very little or no money at all, while having fun!

1. Take a walk.

Walking is the ultimate low budget exercise and something that a lot of people do very little of these days. Even taking a regular brisk walk around the block will help improve your fitness. Use local parks, hiking trails, and open spaces in your local area to help keep the activity varied and interesting. In the morning, try taking a short walk while drinking coffee or tea and while listening to the birds and enjoying the peacefulness.

How many people use elevators instead of stairs without giving it a second thought? Using stairs can give you little bursts of exercise throughout the day.

In addition to walking, don't forget the familiar exercises that were learned in PE class such as jumping jacks, sit ups/crunches, lunges, leg lifts, squats, and waist bends/side bends.

2. Get creative!

Try some "speed cleaning." Put on fast dance music and see how quickly the house is cleaned up. Speedy sweeping and mopping not only get the floors sparkling, but also keeps you fit and trim.

Try using soup cans as weights for exercising the arms. They weigh approximately one pound each and are great for beginners. Work your way up and use the larger soup cans that weigh about two pounds.

To incorporate bench press training, without the cost of the bench, bar, and weights, take an old broomstick, minus the bristles, and tie socks weighted with rocks or sand to both ends and press away!

3. Use your local resources.

Some libraries have exercise DVDs or videos that can be checked out for free. There are all types of videos such as Yoga, Pilates and Tai Chi; this way, you can try a different workout every week. Write down the exercises before the videos are returned to create a variety of home exercise programs. These exercises can be completed at home while listening to the radio or a favorite CD.

The benefits of participating in low budget equipment and exercises are that they can be completed during a vacation, lunch break and at home. Remember, it doesn't take a lot of money to be healthy and fit! Create exercise routines that are fun and have variety. Remember, the best exercises are the ones that can be done anywhere, with little or no money required!

Eating Well on a Budget

Margaret Haze, CRRN, CDE, DTR

1. Eat fresh!

Shopping the edges of the store offers the healthier, less processed food. The middle aisles tend to have more processed foods, which are generally more expensive. Right now, many fruits and vegetables are in season and are a good buy. Visiting farmers markets is a good way to get fresh fruits and vegetables. Also, try growing your own vegetables. You can grow them in pots on the patio, or in a garden, if you have a yard. This way, you can grow organic foods on your own.

2. Try a different protein.

Meat dishes are expensive and are not necessary on a daily basis. To save money, have beans, peas, eggs, canned tuna (packed in water) and peanut butter as good sources of protein.

3. Plan ahead.

Look through weekly ads for specials at different stores. Clip coupons that you will use and are really cost-savers. Plan your shopping trip well by making menus ahead of time. Make a list from the menus and stick to it.

4. Read what you eat.

Another real money-saver is to read food labels carefully. This way you can really learn which is the better buy and which is better nutritionally. Buying the store brands will also help to save money.

One more thing: Do not shop when you are hungry. Eat or drink something first. This will help you avoid making impulse buys.

Taking Aspirin to Prevent Heart Attacks (For Men)

VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

How does aspirin help men prevent heart attacks?

Plaque is a sticky substance that sometimes builds up and blocks arteries that carry blood to the heart. This can cause heart disease, including angina (“AN-je’nah”) and heart attacks. Aspirin can help blood flow smoothly to the heart. If you are a man aged 45-79, talk with your provider about whether to take aspirin to reduce the chances of a heart attack.

Does aspirin also help women prevent heart attacks?

Aspirin is NOT useful in preventing heart attacks in women, but it IS USEFUL for preventing strokes.

What increases the chances of having a heart attack?

Major risk factors for heart attack include:

- Older age
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol level
- Smoking

The more of these risk factors you have, the greater your chances of having a heart attack.

How much can aspirin reduce the chance of having a heart attack?

It depends on your age, your health, and your lifestyle. If you smoke, the best way to prevent a heart attack is to quit smoking. Whether you smoke or not, taking aspirin gives you some protection against a heart attack. In general, aspirin reduces the chance of a first heart attack by about 32% in men.

Is there any harm in taking aspirin?

Taking aspirin can cause bleeding in the stomach. This can sometimes be serious. This risk increases with age. This risk also increases if aspirin is used together with another anti-inflammatory medicine like ibuprofen or naprosyn (Advil®, Motrin®, Naproxen®, Aleve®, etc.)

Taking aspirin also increases the chances of a rare kind of stroke.

Should you take aspirin?

It’s always a good idea to talk with your provider before taking aspirin to prevent a heart attack.

If you have already had a heart attack, you should take aspirin unless your provider says not to.

If your chances of a heart attack are high, the benefits of taking aspirin probably outweigh the harms.

Older people are more likely to have a heart attack. But, they are also more likely to have serious stomach bleeding if they take aspirin.

How much aspirin should you take?

If you and your provider decide that aspirin is right for you, then you should take either:

One baby aspirin (81 mg) every day OR

One regular aspirin (325 mg) every other day.

Taking more than these amounts is not more beneficial and can cause serious stomach bleeding.

Here are some questions to ask your provider:

- What are my chances of having a heart attack?
- Would I benefit from taking aspirin?
- Would I be harmed by taking aspirin?
- Will aspirin interfere with my other medications?
- How long should I take aspirin?

For more information, talk with your provider.

Taking an active role in your care can help prevent medication errors! Carry your medication list with you at all times!

VA Palo Alto Health Care System Facilities

VA PALO ALTO DIVISION

3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000

VA LIVERMORE DIVISION

4951 Arroyo Road
Livermore, CA 94550
(925) 373-4700

VA MENLO PARK DIVISION

795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 493-5000

VA CAPITOLA OPC

1350 N. 41st Street,
Suite 102
Capitola, CA 95010
(831) 464-5519

VA MODESTO OPC

1524 McHenry Avenue,
Suite 315
Modesto, CA 95350
(209) 557-6200

VA MONTEREY OPC

3401 Engineer Lane
Seaside, CA 93955
(831) 883-3800

VA SAN JOSE OPC

80 Great Oaks Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95119
(408) 363-3000

VA SONORA OPC

19747 Greenley Road
Sonora, CA 95370
(209) 588-2600

VA STOCKTON OPC

7777 Freedom Drive
French Camp, CA 95231
(209) 946-3400

World Wide Web Address:

www.palo-alto.med.va.gov

Tips for Healthy Living

- Before going back for seconds, wait 10 or 15 minutes. You might not want seconds after all.
- Order your latte or hot chocolate with fat-free (skim) milk.

www.smallstep.gov

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in *To Your Health* feel free to contact:

Nancy Kim, PharmD

Pharmacy Practice Resident

VA Palo Alto Health Care System

3801 Miranda Avenue #119 (Pharmacy)

Palo Alto, CA 94304

(650) 493-5000, ext.66548

To Your Health is published quarterly for VAPAHCS veterans and their families.

Editorial Board:

Randell K. Miyahara, PharmD

Rosemary Gill, RN, MS

Nancy Kim, PharmD

Kris Morrow