

Contact: Bev Hillman
Vancouver Personal & Physical Training
PH: 604-948-0709

Osteoporosis Awareness Month

By: Bev Hillman
Vancouver Personal & Physical Training

May is National Osteoporosis Awareness Month - an appropriate time for reminders about enhancing bone health.

While some bone loss is normal as we age, osteoporosis causes bones to lose their strength and break easily. The trouble is that there are no symptoms or signs of the disease until you experience your first fracture. Here's what you can do to help keep bones healthy and strong.

Because no one single risk factor had been identified for low bone density, it is important to become familiar with all the risk factors and act on those that are within your control. The more risk factors that you have, the more at risk you are for developing the disease.

Some factors are stronger indicators than others, i.e. family history of osteoporosis, prolonged hormonal imbalance, ovaries removed or menopause before age 45, previous fracture with minimal trauma and excess use of certain medication (cortisone and prednisone, anti-consultants, thyroid hormone, aluminum-containing antacids). Other factors include - Caucasian or Asian ancestry, low body weight, not enough calcium or vitamin D in your diet, being a smoker, minimal physical activity, excess intake of caffeine (more than three cups a day of coffee, tea or cola) and excess intake of alcohol (more than two alcoholic drinks a day).

More than 1.4 million Canadians are living with osteoporosis and more women die from osteoporosis than breast cancer. There is no cure for osteoporosis, but you can reduce your risk by:

Get the calcium you need. Calcium is the prime builder of healthy bones. 70 percent of people do not meet the recommended daily intake. Adults need 1,000 milligrams per day and if you are over 50, you should take as much as 1,500 mg of calcium per day. This can be done by consuming three to four servings of milk and dairy products including cheese and yogurt as well as calcium fortified soy milk, orange juice, breakfast cereal and canned salmon with bones. If you are not getting enough in your diet, consider taking a supplement. When buying a calcium supplement choose those made with calcium citrate and only take 500 milligrams per dose for better absorption. It is wise to consult your primary-care physician or a registered nutritionist for all individual dosages.

Don't forget vitamin D is necessary for effective absorption of calcium from your diet. Without it, your body is capable of absorbing only 15 percent of the calcium you consume. Vitamin D is unique among vitamins - it is made in your body when sunlight strikes your skin. Twenty minutes of sunlight on your arms and face every day is all that is required for most people. If you aren't outside much and the winter months a dreary you may need more. Only a few foods such as milk (about 90 IUs per cup - 250 ml), some fish (salmon contains about 400 IUs per three-ounce serving), egg yolks and liver are naturally good sources. If you don't think you are getting the recommended amount (200 international Units (IU) for 19 to 50 year olds, 400 IU for 51 to 70 year olds and 600 IU for adults older than 70) consider a supplement.

Regular exercise has been shown to encourage bone growth throughout life. Numerous studies underscore the importance of physical activity throughout life for the development of maximum bone density in young adulthood and the delay of bone mineral loss during middle and old age. While most weight-bearing activities appear to help protect bone density, activities that place more stress on muscles and bone lead to the greatest protection. It is for that reason that strength training, such as weight lifting, is especially beneficial.

According to the American Dietetic Association (ADA), 90 percent of teenage girls and 70 percent of teenage boys do not get enough calcium to meet their age group's recommended daily intake of 1,300 milligrams. Choosing a cola instead of milk is one of the main reasons for poor bone strength in teenagers. The phosphoric acid in colas, combined with low calcium intake may impede teens' ability to attain peak bone mass, a contributing factor in osteoporosis in later life. Recent research at the University of Vermont found that "children who consumed flavored milk had a higher total milk intake than those who drank regular milk. Plus, the flavored-milk drinkers tended to drink fewer soft drinks and fruit drinks. According to ADA spokesperson Jackie Berning, RD, assistant professor at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, "It is vital for children to consume adequate amounts of calcium to help promote strong bones, and if flavored milk does the trick, then drink up!"

Osteoporosis does not have to be an inevitable part of aging. If you take simple steps now, you may never have to worry about dangerous hip or spinal fractures.

For more information contact Bev Hillman at 604-948-0709, or contact her via e-mail at bev@trainwithbev.com.

Tel. 604-948-0709
info@trainwithbev.com
TrainWithBev.com