

# The Wellness Express

Jump on the train to good health

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## What You Need to Know About Osteoporosis

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Does grandma really need to worry about suffering a hip fracture?

According to recent statistics, she does. One in four women over the age of 50 is at risk for osteoporosis, and 80% of all fractures occurring in people over the age of 60 are osteoporosis-related. Hip fractures are common when those with osteoporosis experience a fall.

Osteoporosis is a disease defined by a person losing a significant amount of bone density compared to normal values. Since this disease is not typically painful, usually the first symptom of osteoporosis is a bone fracture. The most common bones fractured are the wrist, the hip and the spine.

### How serious are bone fractures?

Fractures caused by osteoporosis are associated with considerable suffering and illness. Hip fractures related to osteoporosis result in death in up to 30% of all cases! One study reported that women with established osteoporosis frequently report fear, anxiety and depression. Another study of elderly women reported that the majority would choose death over having a hip fracture and being admitted to a nursing home.

### How do I know if I have osteoporosis?

X-rays can show the *quality* your bone density. But to see *quantity*, your bone mineral density (BMD) must be measured. The most accurate BMD testing device is the DEXA scanner. The results of this test are compared to the results from a healthy 30-year old of the same sex and ethnic background as you. This creates a T-score, which represents the number of standard deviations away from the normal score. From this information, your condition can be diagnosed.

According to the World Health Organization:

- If the bone density is normal, the T-score should be -1.0 or higher.
- If the T-score is -2.5 or lower, a person is said to have *osteoporosis*.
- If the T-score is between -1.0 and -2.5, a person is said to have *osteopenia*.

### What causes osteoporosis?

There is no single known cause for this disease.

### Exercise of the Week

Seated Glute Stretch (Figure 4)  
Difficulty: Easy

(Consult your chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise.)

**Start:** Sit on a chair, with both feet on floor, knees apart.

**Exercise:** Place one ankle on opposite knee. Then, bend forward until you feel a good stretch in hip. Hold for 30-60 seconds, then return to start position. Switch sides, and repeat 2X per side.



However, since the normal formation of bone requires the adequate absorption of calcium, anything that can interfere with the metabolism of dietary calcium in the body can increase the risk of developing osteoporosis. This includes any diseases affecting the kidneys, parathyroid gland or intestines.

Inactivity may also lead to decreased bone density. Weight-bearing loads on the large bones of the body trigger the uptake of minerals and encourage their proper structural integrity.

### Major Risk Factors for Osteoporosis:

- Age 65 or older
- Family history of osteoporotic fracture (especially if mother had a hip fracture)
- Long-term (more than 3 months continuously) use of glucocorticoid therapy
- Medical conditions that inhibit absorption of nutrients
- Primary hyperparathyroidism
- Osteopenia apparent on x-ray
- Hypogonadism (low testosterone in men, loss of menstrual periods in younger women)
- Early menopause (before age 45)

### How is osteoporosis treated?

Currently, there are a number of medications used to treat this problem. Their function is to improve the absorption of calcium into the body, and enhancing the uptake of calcium by the bones.

Increasing the dietary intake of calcium and vitamin D3 is also known to help reduce the risk of fractures in those with osteoporosis.

The best treatment is prevention – and because peak bone mass in adolescents is usually a strong indicator of whether a person will develop osteoporosis later on in adulthood, the prevention of this disease begins in childhood.

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Below are recommendations for daily dietary calcium intake:

Age:	Calcium:
4-8 years old	800mg
9-18 years old	1,300mg
19-49 years old	1,000mg
50+ years old	1,500mg
Pregnant or lactating, 18+	1,000mg

Vitamin D can help increase the absorption of calcium by 30-80%. It is recommended people between 19 - 50 years old should get 400IU daily of vitamin D3, and people over 50 should get 800IU daily.

### Chiropractic and Osteoporosis

If you think you may have osteoporosis, tell your chiropractor. If your bones are fragile, there is an increased risk for fractures with spinal manipulation - although it is a very rare occurrence.

Physical activity is one of the best ways of both preventing and treating osteoporosis. In order to keep active, a healthy musculoskeletal system is paramount. Alignment, posture and coordination are all important factors. Chiropractic adjustments, with their positive influence on the nervous system, assist in the prevention of osteoporosis by improving functionality in each of these areas.

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## Quote of the Week

To get rich never risk your health. For it is the truth that health is the wealth of wealth.

- Richard Baker



## References and Sources:

Breaking Barriers, Not Bones. 2008 National Report Card on Osteoporosis Care – *Osteoporosis Canada*

WHO Scientific Group on the Prevention and Management of Osteoporosis – *World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 2000.*



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