



e-quilibrium

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Bones

A fall can be life-threatening, especially for older adults. Among adults over 50, nearly a quarter of patients die in the year following a hip fracture. Women are from two to three times more likely than men to fracture a hip, but men are twice as likely to die in the year after the fracture. Furthermore, among those who survive more than a year after hip fracture, many persons experience significant disability.

Osteoporosis, which literally means porous bone, is a condition that we associate with older women. According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, approximately 80% of the 10 million Americans estimated to have osteoporosis are women. It is believed that at least an additional 30 million Americans have low bone mass meaning that they are at much higher risk for osteoporosis. Taken together, over half of individuals in the United States who are over fifty are at risk for fractures because of low bone density. The number of individuals affected by osteoporosis is projected to increase as the population ages.

Optimizing peak bone mass at younger ages is thought to help prevent osteoporosis later in life. Bone mass typically isn't a matter of concern to younger persons, or to men, since osteoporosis is commonly regarded to be an older woman's disease. However, osteoporosis can also strike younger individuals, and affects millions of men, as previously noted. Importantly, the behavior of younger adults, both men and women, is crucial to help prevent osteoporosis and the morbidity and mortality associated with low bone density.

The following behaviors are known to reduce the risk of osteoporosis:

- Getting recommended amounts of calcium and Vitamin D
- Getting regular exercise, especially weight bearing and muscle strengthening activities
- Avoiding smoking
- Avoiding excessive alcohol use

One of the good things about the behaviors that promote health is that the habits that reduce risk for one health problem usually also reduce risk for other health problems. In other words, there is relatively little conflict about what constitutes positive health behavior versus negative health behavior. As you can see, this is the case regarding the prevention of osteoporosis.

Bones are the structural foundation of our bodies. Therefore, bone health is crucial to well being and quality of life.

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