

ASK YOUR PHARMACIST

Your pharmacist is your medication expert and can provide advice and information on a wide range of health issues

Preventing Osteoporosis



What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis can be a crippling disease that causes bones to become weak and brittle and break easily. Even a cough or a simple fall can break a bone in someone with osteoporosis. Hip, spine and wrist bones break most often. Osteoporosis can also affect posture by weakening the spine.

Who Gets Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis affects one in four women and one in eight men over 50 years of age — nearly 1.5 million Canadians! Treating osteoporosis costs more than \$1.3 billion a year. Osteoporosis does not develop overnight and some people are more likely to

develop it than others. The more risk factors you have, the greater your risk. You can change some; others you can't.

Risk Factors You CAN Change:

- ◆ low estrogen
- ◆ not enough calcium and vitamin D in your diet — bones need calcium to stay strong
- ◆ not enough physical activity
- ◆ smoking cigarettes
- ◆ too much alcohol — regularly more than two drinks a day
- ◆ too much caffeine — more than three cups a day of coffee, tea or cola.

Risk Factors You CANNOT Change:

- ◆ having a thin, 'small-boned' body
- ◆ being female
- ◆ family history of osteoporosis
- ◆ getting older
- ◆ long-term use of certain medications (e.g., corticosteroids, anticonvulsants)
- ◆ of Caucasian or Asian background.

More on Estrogen

Estrogen is a female hormone — it plays an important role in keeping women's bones healthy. After menopause, estrogen levels decrease sharply. Without estrogen, cells that remove old bone are more active than the cells that build new bone, leading to a faster rate of bone loss. If you are a woman at menopause, discuss with your physician and pharmacist the benefits and risks of hormone replacement therapy.

Can Osteoporosis be Prevented?

Yes, in many cases it can. Osteoporosis can also be treated in many people. The key to prevention is to start early — the younger the better. Making lifestyle changes can help prevent bones from becoming brittle.

**For more information,
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