

Facts about Osteoporosis You Did Not Know

Of all the health issues that modern women face, a condition called osteoporosis is one of the most prevalent. The disease is caused by excessive loss of calcium in the bones, resulting in brittle and easily fractured bones.

Who is Prone to Osteoporosis?

While men can develop osteoporosis, the disease is most often found in women. The disease usually occurs following the onset of menopause, after the age of forty. As women experience menopause, their bodies produce less estrogen. Estrogen helps our bodies to retain calcium, and is instrumental in helping the bones stay strong. For this reason, many post-menopausal women will supplement their calcium intake in order to retain their bone density.

Men may also be affected by osteoporosis, but the number of men afflicted with the condition is generally much lower than the rate in which the disease affects women. This is partly due to the fact that men tend to have more bone mass than women. However, the normal aging process can cause osteoporosis to develop in men, as well as women.

The most prominent risk factors for developing osteoporosis are being female, and roughly menopause age. Additionally, Caucasian females appear to be at a greater risk. Osteoporosis also tends to affect individuals with reduced muscular activity. Being underweight can be a contributing factor, so those with eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia often find themselves at greater risk of developing the disease. Finally, a family history of osteoporosis is a major risk factor. If you know that osteoporosis runs in your family, making changes to your lifestyle can help protect you from developing this condition.

How is Osteoporosis Diagnosed?

Early diagnosis and preliminary treatment of osteoporosis can be tricky, because many people don't realize they have the condition until they suffer from some kind of injury. Patients will often suffer from a bone fracture before they receive a positive osteoporosis diagnosis. However, changes in modern women's health care is making it possible to detect the disease in its early stages, and even prevent osteoporosis altogether. New advances in bone scanning make it possible for doctors to test the bone density of their patients. With early detection and treatment, the progress of osteoporosis can be slowed or even stopped before too much damage is done.

There are steps that you can take if you feel that you are at risk for developing osteoporosis. The first and most important step is to discuss your concerns and symptoms with your doctor or healthcare professional. He or she will take a full medical history, and will ask you to undergo a complete a physical exam. If you appear to be at risk for this condition, your doctor should order a blood test analysis to check your calcium levels, assess your thyroid level, and rule out other forms of arthritis. He or she may also take X-rays to view your bone density. This is done through a special machine called a bone densitometer, which actually allows the experts to see inside your bones. This is a painless yet accurate way for doctors to measure your bone density, and it can help your doctor to determine whether you may be at risk for developing osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is one of the most common forms of arthritis in the United States. Fortunately, increased education and public attention has led to a greater awareness of the condition. Now, more than ever before, women are able to fully understand the importance of preventing osteoporosis, and have greater knowledge of the treatment options available.