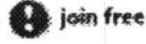




Osteoporosis



Osteoporosis-DIRECT

Preventing Osteoporosis

In recent years, scientists have identified several measures that may help reduce the toll of osteoporosis. Estrogen replacement is the only one of these measures in which there is well-documented evidence of its effectiveness in the prevention of fractures from osteoporosis.

Although complete proof is lacking that the other measures -- such as increased calcium intake -- prevent bone loss leading to fractures, many believe that current data are sufficient to suggest that these measures be adopted.

How much calcium is enough? New guidelines (Aug. '97) from the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academy of Science suggest that calcium needs differ depending on age. In general, adults ages 19 to 50 should get at least 1,000 mg a day to maintain maximize "peak bone mass," according to the guidelines. But adolescents and older adults should get more calcium. The guidelines recommend 1,300 mg a day for children ages nine through 18, and 1,200 mg a day for adults over 50.

Some experts believe exercise is just as important as nutrition for building bone mass and preventing bone loss. Weight-bearing exercises--walking, jogging, weight-training--are thought best for strengthening bones. But at least one study has shown that swimming--a non-weight bearing exercise--also helped a group of women build bone mass.

Exercise also builds muscle strength and agility, which can reduce the risk for falls and fractures. It's important, however, for anyone who has already suffered a fracture to begin their rehabilitation and exercise program in consultation with a physician.

Even if you exercise, get plenty of calcium, and avoid substances that can weaken bones, it is still possible to get osteoporosis. Genetics also play a major role in your peak bone mass. So you may simply be born with a tendency toward weaker bones.

Still, many experts believe that young women can build a high peak bone mass to reduce the risk of developing osteoporosis. Middle-age and older women and men also may be able to keep osteoporosis from occurring or progressing.

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