



Are you feeding your bones enough calcium?



Have you enjoyed a nice, cool glass of milk lately?
What about a cup of yogurt?
Not a fan of dairy products?
So, what about broccoli or almonds?
If not, I am willing to bet that your skeleton is starving!!

I know what you may be thinking, "My skeleton has NEVER mentioned anything about feeling hungry." This may be true, but there might be a silent, common disease called osteoporosis at work.

Don't want to be caught by surprise? Want to help prevent it? Read on to learn more about the disease, who is at risk, and what you can do to make sure you are prepared.

What is it?

Osteoporosis is a disease of weak bones. If we could look at our bones very closely, we would see that our bones have holes in them, like a honeycomb. In osteoporosis, these holes become larger, which make our bones weaker, and leads to fractures or breaks. As we age, it is not as easy to recover from, oh let's say a broken arm, as it was when we were younger. This may in turn have a greater impact on our health.

Now, about that hungry skeleton. Our skeleton acts as a support and frame for our body. Our bones that make up our skeleton consist of:

- Collagen, which allows our bones to bend and flex slightly
- Minerals like calcium and phosphate: These make your bones strong!!
- And bone cells that repair and maintain our bones

Like other tissue in our body, our bones are alive, changing and growing every day. But, as we age bone loss speeds up, making bones weaker, and causing them to break more easily. So, in osteoporosis, you either don't make enough new bone; you lose too much bone; or both.

Who is at risk?

Osteoporosis is a common disease that affects nearly 10 million Americans. Of those affected by the disease, 80 percent are women. And yes, men may be affected as well. Twenty percent may not seem like a huge deal, but that means out of 10 million Americans, 2 million of those affected are men.

Other risk factors include: • Women 65 and older; • Men 70 and older; • Women who have gone through menopause; • Men 50 and older who also have broken a bone after age 50; family members with osteoporosis; smokes cigarettes; and have smaller, thinner frames; • Having some medical

conditions that can cause osteoporosis like: Low testosterone in men, early menopause in women, rheumatoid arthritis, and certain cancers;
• Taking medications that can cause osteoporosis like: Steroid medicines, thyroid medicines, few anti-seizure medicines, and some treatments for breast or prostate cancer.

So, what can we do about it? First, talk with your doctor about your risk for osteoporosis. Work with him/her to develop a plan to keep your bones strong. They may want you to get a bone mineral density (BMD), or a DEXA scan. These are non-invasive ways to measure how much bone you have in different parts of your body.

Your plan to help prevent osteoporosis may include:

- Getting enough calcium and vitamin D. Calcium is part of your bones and helps make them strong! Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium, so it is important to get enough of both. Dairy products, such as low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese; Calcium enriched items, such as juices and some cereals; and also broccoli, some green vegetables, and almonds contain calcium. It is recommended that adults 50 years of age and older get 1,200 mg of calcium every day, and 800 to 1,000 IU of vitamin D. Not getting enough from food? Talk to your doctor and he/she may recommend a vitamin pill, or calcium supplement.
- Weight-bearing exercise, which includes activities like walking, dancing, or walking up stairs. Remember, it is important to talk to your doctor about a safe exercise plan for YOU.
- Don't smoke. Smoking is harmful to the cells in your bones and lungs which makes exercise harder to do.
- Drink alcohol in moderation. Alcohol slows the building of new bone. Also, you may be at a higher risk for a fall.

So, know risk factors for osteoporosis and ways you can help prevent it. Remember, milk relay does do a body good, and may lead to Healthier Tomorrows.

More information:

- National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF), 1232 22nd St N.W. Washington, D.C. 20037-1202 Phone: 1 (800) 231-4222 Web site: www.nof.org
- Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research Web site: www.mayoclinic.com/health/osteoporosis/DS00128

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