

No Bones About It

A Quarterly Patient Newsletter from Orthopaedic Surgery Associates of Marquette, P.C.

Protect Your Bones:

Invest in Your Future

By Victoria Asmus, PA-C

Are you doing all you can to ensure a healthy skeleton? Did you know that many fractures can be prevented? Often, when a bone breaks, it also causes a break in your quality of life. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to improve your bone health at any age. The first step is to talk to your medical care provider.

If you have experienced a fracture, it may be the result of osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a silent disease, meaning that you don't always know you have a problem until you break a bone. Bones are made of living tissue. New bone is constantly being made, replacing old bone to keep your body strong.

When you have osteoporosis, your bones break down faster than they are rebuilt. Over time, the bones become weak. Osteoporotic bone is characterized by a thinner outer shell and larger spongy holes on the interior. This results in bone that is more fragile and easy to break. Osteoporosis affects up to 40% of postmenopausal women. One in two women over the age of 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in her remaining lifetime. Although the prevalence is higher in women, one-third of all hip fractures occur in men.

The good news is that when patients are screened and treated there is a significant decrease in the number of fractures.

Once is enough! If you have had one fragility fracture, you are 2-4 times more likely to sustain another fracture. A wrist fracture can be an opportunity to get the appropriate treatment to prevent future hip and spine fractures, that can be much more disabling. If you are being seen in the clinic for a broken bone and have one or more of the following risk factors, you may be a candidate for further evaluation tests. Common risk factors include: age, female, Caucasian or Asian race, post-menopausal, history of surgical removal of both ovaries, personal history of fracture as an adult, history of fragility fracture in a close relative, low body weight and thinning bone, current smoker, three or more alcoholic drinks a day, sedentary lifestyle, diet low in calcium or vitamin D, and the chronic use of oral steroids. Some chronic diseases, especially if left untreated, and certain medications can increase the risk of osteoporosis.

How do you know if you have osteoporosis? Bone mineral density can be assessed using a painless low dose x-ray called a DEXA (dual energy x-ray absorptiometry) scan. Once scanned, your bone mineral density is compared to the bone mineral density of young, healthy individuals to determine if you have osteoporosis.

Regardless of fracture history, ALL women over age 65 and ALL men over 70 are candidates for DEXA scanning or osteoporosis evaluation.

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A DEXA scan may be suggested at an earlier age, especially if you have sustained a fracture after minimal trauma or have risk factors as noted above. A blood test is also often recommended at the time of your osteoporosis work-up to rule out other secondary causes of osteoporosis and check levels of hormones and vitamins that are important in bone healing.

Treatment and prevention starts with optimal calcium and vitamin D supplementation, starting in childhood and continuing to adulthood. The skeleton acts as a calcium “bank” to maintain serum calcium levels and will do so at the expense of bone. Most Americans do not get adequate calcium in their diets. A negative calcium balance equivalent to a ¼ of a glass of milk a day can mean the difference between healthy bone and osteoporosis over time. Maximal bone mass is achieved by about age 30. Achieving a high peak bone mass in your 20’s and 30’s can result in long term health benefits and decrease the risk of factors later in life. Just like a retirement plan, if you save when you are younger you will have a “nest egg” in the bank to rely on when you are older. The adolescent years are an important time to encourage adequate calcium intake. **Adolescents and young adults of both sexes need about 1300 mg of calcium per day.** Encourage milk instead of soda or juice. **Premenopausal women need at least 1000 mg a day.** **Post-menopausal women need about 1200 mg of calcium per day.** **Men need at least 1000 mg per day.** The requirements are slightly increased for fracture healing.

The main source of vitamin D is sun exposure, but some patients do not attain adequate vitamin D levels even with “good” sun exposure. Living in the upper latitudes in the Upper Peninsula decreases the opportunity to get adequate vitamin D, especially in the winter months, even in those individuals who spend a lot of time outdoors. The Vitamin D recommendations for people over 50 are 800-1000 IU per day. Current recommendations for pediatric patients have been raised from 200 to 400 IU per day.

Other things you can do to reduce your risk of fracture include stopping smoking, moderation of alcohol intake, reducing your risk of falls, weight-bearing exercise, and balance and strength training.

Osteoporosis is NOT a normal part of aging and by taking the above simple steps we can reduce the number of fragility fractures and improve quality of life.

Catch us on the Web

www.UpBoneDoctors.com is packed with a lot of great information. Some highlights include:

- OSAM’s Mission and Guiding Principles.
- Animated videos regarding a variety of common orthopaedic conditions and procedures at the About Your Condition & Procedure link.
- Get to know about your provider at our Doctors and Provider Staff link.
- View testimonials from a number of our satisfied patients at the What People Are Saying link.
- For your convenience, there are downloadable patient forms for you to complete prior to your office visit at the Patient Forms link.
- Links to other resources such as our affiliated hospitals, businesses, associations and societies at Links & Resources.
- Access the current and past issues of No Bones About It at the Patient Newsletter link.

If you have thoughts, ideas or feedback regarding the website, send us an e-mail or give us a call. Contact info is at the Contact Us link.

Business Corner

Medical Identity Theft

Don’t they know me by now?! It may seem repetitive for us to ask for your personal identification and insurance cards at each visit, but we are committed to protecting your “medical” identity. Yes, identity theft has moved into the realm of medicine with people posing as someone else in order to receive medical care. Be on the look-out. If you receive medical billing statements or see entries in your medical records for treatment you never received, you could be the victim of medical identify theft. Please report any suspicious statements, records or other activities to one of our staff immediately. Together we can protect your medical identity.