# Aging and Osteoporosis

by ERIC PATTERSON

## Slow Down Aging and Osteoporosis

Everyone wants time. Time gives you the ability to get more out of life. You can spend more hours with people you love. You can watch more of your favorite TV show, listen to your favorite music, and go on more vacations and visit the places you have always dreamed of seeing. More time is the goal, but the extra time is not free.

There is a cost for the time in your life.  It is aging.  Whether or not you like the fee for time, it is unavoidable. Time marches on and takes its toll on your physical and mental health.  You become slower and weaker as your sharp wit becomes a bit duller.  Aging brings with it increased opportunities of positive life events, but it also bring increased chances of physical ailments.

One specific chronic medical condition that is mostly associated with growing older is osteoporosis.  Like aging, osteoporosis is a process that typically begins slowly and goes undetected for a period of time until the day you receive the diagnosis.

Aging and osteoporosis is so linked, in fact, that it is more helpful to consider treatments that target both.  Why waste time, effort and energy with interventions that only diminish the unwanted effects of aging or only improve your osteoporosis symptoms when many techniques overlap?

By being efficient, you can get back to enjoying life instead of worry about the quantity of it.

### Stress, Aging and Osteoporosis

Any information about aging and osteoporosis should begin with stress.  Stress ages you.  Your body contains countless cells, and each cell contains telomeres that shorten each time a cell divides.  This means that tong telomeres are related to being healthy and young.  They help to recycle the old cells into new ones more effectively.  Short telomeres are related to premature aging and poor health.  They are also related to a poorer immune system, which leaves you vulnerable to other conditions.

What is the culprit?  What makes telomeres shorter?  The answer is the stress hormone cortisol.  Cortisol prevents cells from activating an enzyme that keeps their telomeres long.  Simply put, stress inhibits your body's ability to divide cells.  So, quite literally, stress ages you on a cellular level.  Without healthy cells, osteoporosis becomes more severe.

*Next page: focusing on physical health.*

### Focus on the Physical

Osteoporosis triggers unwanted changes to your physical health and well-being.  Aging triggers unwanted

changes to your physical health and well-being. Reducing stress through physical interventions can help slow both osteoporosis and aging. Here's how:

- **Improve diet.** There is no surprise in the idea that you are what you eat. If you eat many overly processed foods that are filled with of sugar, you will not feel up to your potential. Luckily, diets that your doctor recommends to help with osteoporosis tend to be helpful in slowing down the aging process. Foods high in calcium like low-fat milks and cheese are a no-brainer. Add many dark, leafy vegetables and lean meats into your routine. Proteins help to reduce hunger and weight, which will improve your physical health. Beyond foods, ask your doctor about supplements for B vitamins to improve energy and ones that aid the production of elastin and collagen. These help repair the daily damage caused by life. Your cells will love your new diet.
- **Improve sleep.** Without sleep, you cannot function at your best level. When you get longer periods of deep, restful sleep, your body is working to repair damage by growing new cells that replace old ones. Specifically in people with osteoporosis, the process of bone rebuilding or "bone remodeling" is slowed by many factors related to aging. Increasing your sleep can help to balance the losses related to less estrogen production. Experiment with bed times and naps to find the highest quality and quantity of sleep with 9 – 10 hours being the target. If sleep has been a problem, seek out information on ways to improve your sleep hygiene to build good bedtime habits.
- **Improve exercise.** The importance and benefit can never be overstated. If you are not exercising currently, change your routines. If you are exercising, look for ways to diversify and build upon your routines. Walking is a fantastic form of exercise, but doing only one type of exercise can diminish the helpful effects. Work with your doctor to add to or modify your exercise habits. Try new challenges while having awareness that some types of exercise might not be right for you. Being active helps your body produce needed components that lower your stress and let you look and feel better. Stretching, weight lifting, swimming, yoga are only a few of the options available to someone that is serious about exercise. Forget the excuses, get moving and lower your stress.

**Focus on the Mental**

Now that physical changes to limit stress are a priority, you can focus on mental measures to reduce stress. Spend a balanced amount of time working to improve you from the inside out as you do from the outside in. This is especially beneficial since making psychological changes can be more within your control than trying to physical changes. Here's how:

- **Like yourself.** Whether this item sounds overly simplistic or too far out of reach, it is completely necessary. Building self-esteem is a process that cannot be accomplished overnight so keep your efforts consistent for a period of months. What do you like about yourself? What are you good at? What do other people like about you? List as many as you can and review them often. If you cannot like yourself, the aging process feels more negative and overly harsh. This will worsen mood and perceptions that you have of yourself. Improving your self-worth will cushion the blow of aging and reduce stress.

*Next page: additional ways to reduce stress and improve mental health.*

**Focus on the Mental**

- **Stay optimistic.** If you are negative and predict doom, doom will find you. If you can create and maintain optimism, bright days will come your way. Being optimistic creates a hopeful lens through which you see the world. If optimism has never been your strength, spend time each day pondering and writing down good people, places and things in your world. Think about situations in the past where things went your way. People tend to dwell only on the times that things didn't work out. Choose to think differently and invite optimism in your life.
- **Stay realistic.** Being optimistic does not mean being naïve or ignorant to the world around you. Just as being realistic does not give your permission to become overly critical and cynical. Work to balance your new found optimism with realism. A good method to complete this is to look at your past history. Do you

usually fall on the side of being positive or negative? What have the consequences of this approach been? Try to move towards the middle. Aging is not fun just as osteoporosis is undesirable, but there is much to gain from accepting an accurate view of your state.

- **Find purpose.** As people age, they often have trouble finding a sense of purpose and direction. Perhaps you have retired from your job or the kids are out of the house and on their own. A life without goals is one that passes by slowly without enjoyment or accomplishment. Being productive is a great way to feel energized and youthful. Set goals that make sense with your physical state while pushing beyond your comfort zone reasonably. A purpose gives you a sense of identity that may have been lost. Allow what you do to define who you are.
- **Keep in touch.** Social circles grow smaller as you age. People that you know die, move away or lose contact with you normally with the passing of time. This, paired with a limited availability of new social supports, leads to less contact with people on a daily basis. Feeling a strong sense of belonging and connectedness is associated with improved mood, self-esteem and energy. These components will end with a happier, younger-feeling, less-stressed you.

## Conclusion

Take steps that get results. If aging and osteoporosis have you feeling down, do something about it. Acknowledging the link between stress and aging is a great place to start. From there, work to improve your physical body before moving to improving your mental well-being to lower stress. Less stress translates to slower aging. Even the greatest plastic surgeons cannot give you the anti-aging benefits of a life with lower stress. Destress for a long, happy life.