How Osteoporosis Can Sap Your Energy, and What to Do About It

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How to Fight Back Against Osteoporosis Fatigue

When people think of osteoporosis, they typically think of frail bones and the dangers that come along with them. But osteoporosis can interfere with several aspects of your life, sparking a host of other symptoms. In some cases, the illness manifests in ways that seem to have nothing to do with your bones.

Does Osteoporosis Cause Fatigue?

Although it's not at the top of the list of complaints, some people with osteoporosis do experience fatigue as they struggle to maintain their bone health. However, the cause of the exhaustion isn't always clear — in some cases, it's not the osteoporosis that's to blame, but rather another illness altogether.

Get the facts on how osteoporosis and fatigue are related, what your doctor can do for you, and how you can help yourself regain your energy and vitality.

Is Something Else Hiding Behind Your Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis might be a condition of the bones, but it's related to other medical conditions. For instance, it frequently occurs alongside arthritis after middle age, and that can compound the pain and damage. In other cases, osteoporosis is confused with another condition or has been triggered by something that's more commonly linked to fatigue.

Adrenal Fatigue

When your body is too stressed too often, your adrenal system (composed of glands that sit on top of each kidney) is overworked. After pumping out adrenaline and cortisol for a while, these glands can falter, and eventually stop responding to any stress at all, leaving you with a lot of uncomfortable symptoms, including severe fatigue.

What does this have to do with osteoporosis? Well, the adrenal glands help to maintain a balance of minerals in your body through the release of certain hormones, so when those hormone levels fall, your bone composition can suffer. If you're feeling weak, tired and stressed, it's time to visit your doctor to see if your adrenal system is contributing to your osteoporosis.

Parathyroid Disorders

Like the adrenal glands, your parathyroid gland is responsible for mineral regulation — namely, calcium levels.

When something goes wrong with your parathyroid, you could suffer from a lack of energy, kidney stones, depression, and (since calcium is at the root of the problem) osteoporosis.

Parathyroid diseases can run in the family, but they may also develop from a benign tumor or as a result of kidney disease. In many cases, there are no symptoms, or vague symptoms (like fatigue and muscle aches). Kidney stones are another related illness, so if you suffer from both stones and bone loss, it's time to look deeper into your parathyroid function.

Looking at Your Lifestyle for Clues

While health conditions could be at the root of your osteoporosis fatigue, the choices you make each day can carry a lot of weight, too. Your energy level isn't static: you have the ability to increase your vitality or reduce it through your daily habits.

Lack of Exercise

Osteoporosis won't necessarily bring pain, but it can limit movement and activity.

Perhaps you've already suffered a fracture and are reluctant to push yourself too much. Or maybe you've never been very active, and now it's just too hard to get started. In any case, staying stationary is probably contributing to your exhaustion.

Studies have shown that exercise is a powerful way to increase energy levels, even among people with chronic disease. A study published in *Psychological Bulletin* analyzed 70 previous studies on exercise and fatigue, and found that more than 90 percent of them showed sedentary people gained more energy from exercise than from stimulant medications.

Not sure where to start? Just a few extra minutes of walking, stair climbing, or any activity with a bit of exertion can get the ball rolling, and then you can add more workouts to your schedule, and tack on a few extra minutes per workout each week. Soon your endurance will increase, and so will your energy.

Poor Eating Habits

When you're diagnosed with osteoporosis, you may begin treatment with an overhaul to your diet. This makes perfect sense: insufficient calcium, vitamin D, potassium, and other important compounds and minerals may have brought you to this state, and you don't want those deficiencies to make things worse. Many people will immediately add in more calcium and vitamins to get back on the right track.

But have you considered where you're getting your vitamins and minerals? If you've begun to take supplements to boost your levels, you may be neglecting important food sources that bring more than just minerals.

Take an honest look at your menu to be sure you're getting enough calories (the basic units of energy), an array of vitamins (which keep your cells healthy and energized), and enough water (most fruit and veggies have lots!). The more nutritious compounds you can get from whole foods, the better your body will be able to use them, and the fewer side effects you'll experience.

Medication for Energy

It's natural to look for an energy boost from caffeine, energy drinks or other supplements, but be careful about what you bring into your routine. Experts are still unsure of the role caffeine plays in bone density loss (cola and coffee seem to negatively affect the bones, while black tea improves bone mass, and all have caffeine), but most will agree that over 400 mg a day is not doing your bones any favors.

If your osteoporosis fatigue continues to interrupt your life regardless of diet or exercise changes, you might need to pay more attention to your sleep. If you struggle with sleep each night, you need to talk to your doctor about potential treatments to help you get the shut-eye you need to refresh and regenerate your body.