# How to Avoid Dangerous Complications of Osteoporosis

by KRYSTINA OSTERMEYER

## Complications of Osteoporosis

Being told you have osteoporosis can be scary. Weakening bones mean an increased risk of fractures, which can be dangerous regardless of your age. It can cause life-threatening complications for older people. Knowing this, what can you do to avoid complications of osteoporosis? Preventing fractures from happening in the first place is the best plan of action.

### Improving Nutrition

Improving your diet can help improve bone density, which in turn can prevent fractures.

#### Calcium

Calcium is essential for bone health. It is best to get calcium from food sources if possible, as research is possibly showing that an excess of calcium can contribute to heart disease.

Those deficient in calcium should supplement only at the recommendation of their physician.

- Between the ages of 18 and 50, for all genders, the recommended amount of calcium is 1,000 milligrams per day.
- 1,200 milligrams of calcium should be consumed by females over the age of 50 and by males over the age of 70.
- The Institute of Medicine recommends that for all people over the age of 50, no more than 2,000 milligrams of calcium should be consumed.
- If possible, consume calcium-rich foods, including dairy products (such as milk, cheese and yogurt), dark, leafy greens (such as kale and romaine lettuce), soy products and foods that are fortified with calcium, such as certain juices and cereals.

#### Protein

Protein is a building block of the body. Consuming an adequate amount of protein is important to ensure that bones are strong.

Most people consume enough protein without thinking about it. However, older adults may have a difficult time eating enough protein, as may vegans and vegetarians.

Protein supplementation is an option. Consuming non-meat foods is also an option; this includes foods such as soy, nuts, beans, dairy and eggs, if allowed in the diet.

#### Vitamin D

Vitamin D improves the body's ability to utilize calcium. It can be obtained by direct sunlight, but this is not feasible for everyone. In these cases, vitamin D must be obtained via supplementation or food sources.

There are actually very few foods that are rich in vitamin D, as it must be obtained by direct sunlight:

- Mushrooms that have grown in direct sunlight.
- Wild-caught salmon and mackerel.
- Egg yolks, cheese and fortified dairy products.

Sometimes supplementation is necessary. Most over-the-counter multivitamins will contain 600 international units to 800 international units of vitamin D, but typically up to 4,000 international units of vitamin D is considered safe.

**Quitting Smoking**

Smoking has been shown to increase the risk of osteoporosis. In fact, research shows that long-term smoking increases the risk of fractures in old age.

It stands to reason that quitting smoking, even if you have been smoking for many years, will decrease your risk of fractures.

Quitting smoking is beneficial for general health as well. If you choose to quit smoking to protect your bone health, you will also improve your overall health.

There are a variety of ways to quit smoking, whether you quit cold turkey, use medication aides, or enroll in smoking cessation programs.

**Exercise**

Exercise may sound counterintuitive. After all, increased movement may make you fall, right?

While this may be true, doing the right kind of exercise can actually strengthen your bones, preventing a fracture from happening.

High-impact exercises may not be safe and could actually cause a fracture, but low-impact exercises (such as walking) are recommended. In addition, exercises that build muscle also build bone, so try weight-bearing exercises like lifting weights.

Yoga and tai chi can improve balance, which is also important in preventing a fracture from happening in the first place.

**Fall Prevention**

Preventing falls from happening is important. Buying shoes with nonslip soles can keep you from slipping and falling, as can fall-proofing your surroundings.

This includes removing things that are a fall hazard, such as extraneous objects from the floor, cords and area rugs. Keep rooms bright so you can see where you are going and place bars in showers and around toilets.

**In Conclusion**

We hope you found this article insightful. If you are worried about falls and fractures due to osteoporosis, then talk to your doctor. They can send you on the right preventive path, including some of the above techniques. Natural methods and diet changes may not work for everyone, so be prepared for medical intervention too.