Increase Your Bone Mass

by MARLENE WALLACE

Treatments Marlene Used to Get Off Medications

While my mother was never formally diagnosed, she developed a noticeable “stoop” in her posture as she got older which was a clue that she likely had osteoporosis. This is one of the few outward signs of osteoporosis.

When I told my doctor that both my mother and older sister had the condition, he decided to order a bone density procedure early on so I could begin treatment as soon as possible. Thus, I received the test at a fairly young age (around 45) and was diagnosed with osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis Treatments:

Currently there is no cure for osteoporosis. However, there are several treatment methods:

- **Vitamin D and Calcium:** Easily obtained from diet and supplements, this vitamin and mineral are extremely valuable in both the prevention of osteoporosis and also as part of an effective treatment plan. Calcium actually maintains bone density in adults while Vitamin D is very important in this process as it lets the body absorb calcium properly.
- **Medications:** One class of osteoporosis drugs is bisphosphonates. They are “bone building” medications that effectively increase bone mass.
- **Exercise:** Regular exercise assists in building strong bones. It also maintains existing bone density. Individuals who have osteoporosis tend to get the greatest benefit from exercise programs that combine strength training, with the use of weights, and weight-bearing exercises such as walking or jogging. Flexibility and balance exercises are also important to incorporate into daily exercise routines.

In my case, my doctor initially prescribed a bisphosphonate known as alendronic acid (Fosamax). I was on this bone builder for several years. Eventually, it started to lose its effectiveness. So, I was switched to another bisphosphonate called Actonel (risedronate sodium).

After ten years of taking bisphosphonates plus calcium and Vitamin D supplements and eating lots of Vitamin D/calcium rich foods, a bone density test showed that my bone mass had increased significantly. Fortunately, I was taken off of my prescription medications.

Today, I still take 600 mg. of calcium plus 1400 IU of Vitamin D daily. I also drink one glass of milk and eat one serving of yogurt every day as well as cheese a few times per week. In addition, I try to walk at least 30 minutes every day.

As a health care professional, I cannot stress enough the importance of asking your doctor to order a bone mineral density test if you have any of the uncontrollable osteoporosis risk factors listed above.