6 Safety Tips for Those with Osteoporosis

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Osteoporosis Safety Tips

Did you know that osteoporosis affects an estimated 200 million worldwide? Experts believe that it affects one-tenth of women who are 60, one-fifth of women who are 70, two-fifths of women who are 80 and two-fifths of women who are 90.

Osteoporosis is thought to be a disease that affects women. It definitely favors women, but men are not immune. When looking at osteoporotic fractures, one in three women over the age of 50 experience fractures, while one in five men experience fractures.

So, if you are diagnosed with osteoporosis, how can you stay safe? Let's take a look!

Key Statistics

The reason that we want to stay safe if we have osteoporosis is because of the risk of fractures. According to the International Osteoporosis Foundation, "For the year 2000, there were an estimated 9 million new osteoporotic fractures, of which 1.6 million were at the hip, 1.7 million were at the forearm and 1.4 million were clinical vertebral fractures. Europe and the Americas accounted for 51% of all these fractures, while most of the remainder occurred in the Western Pacific region and Southeast Asia."

And these numbers are only projected to increase; by 2050, the incidence of hip fracture in men is expected to rise by 310%, and 240% in women as compared to 1990 rates.

Safety Tips

It doesn't take a lot to keep yourself safe from fractures. All it takes is a little know-how and effort.

1. Start an Exercise Regimen

Consult your healthcare provider to ensure that you are healthy enough for exercise. If you're given the go-ahead, get moving! 150 minutes of activity per week is the general recommendation. Also, review your medication list with your provider. Are you on any medications that may increase your risk of falls? Review your gait and balance issues — is there anything specific you can do to improve, or any activities that you should NOT do?

2. Consider Meeting with a Physical Therapist

Many people find value in meeting with a physical therapist; a physical therapist has experience working with people who have osteoporosis. A main goal is likely working on balance to *prevent* falls from occurring, but they may also identify areas of your body that require strengthening.

3. Work on Balance

Falls are responsible for upwards of half of fractures. Working on your balance can lessen your risk of a fall. Activities like tai chi and yoga may improve your balance while also making sure you get exercise in.

4. Get Proper Footwear

Put away the heels and unsupportive shoes. You should be wearing closed-toe, rubber-soled shoes. They should be comfortable and give you traction. In addition to this, they should also fit well.

5. Lengthen the Spine

Though we think about fractures as occurring in the hip, the arms, the legs… they also can occur in the spine (even without a fall!) That's why we need to keep the spine in great shape. To keep the spine healthy, avoid twisting movements. Though yoga and Pilates may be great for lengthening, avoid the twisting movements as much as you can, and avoid them completely if you do not feel balanced or do not have an instructor who is able to offer safe modifications.

6. Accommodation Equipment

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, accommodation equipment or adaptive devices may be required to stay safe. This doesn't mean that you have failed in your efforts, it just means that you're taking a necessary step in preventing a fracture.

Walkers and canes ensure that there is a greater base of stability to those who may not have great balance. A cane may offer greater flexibility, though it may not offer as much stability.

Handrails can be placed in a variety of places; the most common place is the shower. They can make a huge difference in someone's mobility and independence in performing activities of daily living.

Walk-in showers may be a pricey option. However, conventional showers and bathtubs can pose a huge fall risk for those with poor balance. Installing a walk-in shower can reduce the risk of falls and improve independence.

Reaching aids are items that allow a person who is unsteady on their feet to reach items on the floor or in high places without losing their balance.

Osteoporosis Safety Tips: The Bottom Line

It is important to stay safe if you have osteoporosis. This generally means staying active, but can also mean using adaptive equipment. Hopefully, no matter the severity of your osteoporosis, you will be able to take one or more of these osteoporosis safety tips and incorporate them into your daily routine.