Staying Healthy in Winter

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Staying Healthy in the Winter With Osteoporosis

Your bones, especially those affected by osteoporosis don’t like winter and cold weather for a few reasons - it’s more likely to suffer an injury and fracture due to slippery conditions, plus you exercise less and tend to have less exposure to sun (and be D deficient) in the winter. Luckily, most of these factors can be managed or improved if you become more aware of them and take counteractive measures to ensure you're staying healthy in the winter.

Higher risk of fractures because of slippery conditions

Even young people with healthy strong bones can suffer injuries and fractures when is icy. Falls associated with injuries and fractures are more likely to happen if your bones are frail. What can you do to prevent fractures?

Some medications have side effects such as dizziness or fatigue, which can increase the risk for falls. If you noticed problems like this, talk to your doctor and look into alternative options.

Spend more time indoors to avoid slippery conditions. Try to get grocery and other shopping delivered home. Invite friends and family to your home, rather than you meeting them at a restaurant or visiting them.

Using assistive devices such as canes or walkers may be a wise decision because a fracture heals slower if the bone is affected by osteoporosis; it makes take several months to recover.

If you have to go out, be cautious. Wear proper walking boots that are comfortable, with low heels and non-slip soles. If it’s ice or slippery you may want to use ice grippers attached to your shoes. Be careful when you get on and off a bus or car because often the steps are icy or wet.

Vitamin D levels are lower because you have less exposure to sun

Most Americans are vitamin D deficient. This nutrient is produced in your skin when exposed to the sun and crucial for optimal bone health. Vitamin D improves the absorption of calcium, keeping the bones strong. It also maintains proper function of the muscles which help you have more balance and prevent injuries. To no surprise, this deficiency is aggravated in the winter, because you spend less time in the sun. What can you do to avoid D deficiency?

The diet does not provide enough of this vitamin, and therefore you will need to take it in supplement form. For doses higher than 2000 IU daily you should check with a doctor (who can also order a blood test to evaluate the levels of this nutrient). The diet is however important to get the right amounts of other vitamins and nutrients and avoid excess weight- focus on fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and fish and dairy products like yogurt and cheese. Avoid highly processed foods that are filled with empty calories and lack essential nutrients.

Exercising less can increase the risk of OP and injuries

Just because you have to spend more time indoor should not be an excuse to be less active. If you like to walk or jog, you may want to exercise more at home, or it’s worth investing in a gym membership, at least during the winter time. You need a winter exercise routine, ask a physiotherapist or personal trainer for advice. The best exercises to manage osteoporosis are: strength, posture and balance training. Yoga and Tai Chi are also great options.