TuSalud

Overcoming Osteoporosis

May is National Osteoporosis Awareness Month—and Latinas are at similar risk for low bone density as white women.

May 1, 2012 By Cristina Gonzalez

About 44 million Americans havelow bone density, or osteoporosis. By 2020, that number is expected to increaseto half of all Americans older than 50. And it's not just white women (thegroup most often cited as at risk) who face it. According to Bone Health andOsteoporosis: A Report of the Surgeon General,the prevalence of osteoporosis in the United States among Latinas is similar tothat among white women.

Why should I care about osteoporosis?
A sneeze, a sudden stop, a silly fall—when you haveosteoporosis, actions so simple that they're part of your daily routine cancause a bone to break. About 10 million Americans already live withosteoporosis every day, and about 34 million more are at risk. Estimatessuggest that about half of all women age 50 or older and up to one in four menwill break a bone because of osteoporosis.

And though a broken bone sounds as easy to fix as setting acast, it can severely limit your health. Fractures and breaks can lead tochronic pain, affect your posture, immobilize you, cut you off from people andpleasures, and lead to feelings of anxiety and depression. The condition canalso be very expensive to treat. In 2005, caring for bone fractures caused byosteoporosis added up to $19 billion. By 2025, experts predict, that numberwill reach $25.3 billion. Finally, in more serious cases, osteoporosis canrequire long-term care and even lead to death.

What is osteoporosis, and what causes it?
Osteoporosis is the most common type of bone disease,affecting about one out of five women older than 50. It occurs when the bodyfails to form new bone, when too much old bone is reabsorbed by the body, orboth. Throughout your youth, your body uses two minerals (calcium andphosphate) to continually produce new bones. As you get older, the minerals inyour bones are sometimes reabsorbed into the body, making bone tissue weaker.This process produces brittle and fragile bones that are more prone to fracturesand breaks.

The leading causes of osteoporosis are a drop in estrogen inwomen who are in menopause and a drop in testosterone in men. But other causesinclude chronic rheumatoid arthritis, chronic kidney disease, eating disorders,corticosteroid medications, anti-seizure drugs, hyperparathyroidism,

vitamin Ddeficiency and confinement to a bed.

Could I be at risk?
Though osteoporosis can affect all men and women, women olderthan 50 and men older than 70 are at highest risk. Other risk factors include amenorrhea(absence of menstrual periods), a family history of osteoporosis, a history ofhormone treatment for prostate or breast cancer, low body weight, smoking, toolittle calcium and too much alcohol.

How is osteoporosis detected?
Usually, there are no symptoms in the early stages of thedisease. Late-stage disease symptoms include bone pain or tenderness, fractureswith little or no trauma, a loss of height (as much as 6 inches) over time, lowback pain or neck pain, and a stooped posture. If your doctor thinks you mayhave osteoporosis, the first step is to conduct a bone mineral density test tomeasure how much bone you actually have; this may be followed by a special typeof spine CT (computed tomography scan) and other blood orurine tests.

How is osteoporosis treated?
In general, the goals of osteoporosis treatment are tocontrol pain, slow down or stop bone loss, prevent future bone fractures bystrengthening the bone, and minimize the risk of falls that might causefractures. To do this, your doctor may prescribe a mix of medications, diet andlifestyle changes.

Medications might include drugs called bisphosphonates orcalcitonin, a hormone shot called parathyroid or a drug called raloxifene. Whatdrug you take will be based on your age and hormone levels and the severity ofyour condition. Your doctor may also put you on an exercise and diet plan. Gettingregular exercise can reduce the likelihood of bone fractures, and following adiet that provides the proper amount of calcium, vitamin D, and protein willhelp guarantee that your body has the materials it needs to form and maintainbones.

How can I lower my risk of osteoporosis?
The ways to lower your risk for osteoporosis are verysimilar to those that lower your risk for heart disease or diabetes. First, getregular exercise. Second, make sure you’re maintaining a well-balanced dietthat is rich in calcium and vitamin D. And finally, don’t drink excess alcoholand don’t smoke. Though osteoporosis requires lifetime treatment, it doesn’thave to limit your life or lifestyle.

For more information, check out the National Osteoporosis Foundation.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.tusaludmag.com/article/Overcoming-Osteoporosis-Month-22320-3962