

Take Care Of Your Bones

Are you aware that Osteoporosis is an illness that is affecting millions of women across the globe?

This disease usually targets people after the age of 45 and is more common in post menopausal women. Often called the silent disease because bone loss occurs without symptoms, there is an urgent need for more awareness of osteoporosis.

According to Consultant Orthopaedic, Joint Replacement and Hip Resurfacing Surgeon, Dr Sanjeev Jain, people may not know that they have osteoporosis until their bones become so weak that a sudden strain, bump or fall causes a hip fracture or a vertebral collapse. "Pain and weakness all over is a common symptom. Unfortunately, in many cases, the first real 'symptom' is a broken bone. Loss of height, with the gradual curvature of the back, (caused by vertebral compression fractures) may be the only physical sign of osteoporosis," says Dr Jain. The best ways to prevent it and to protect your bones is to do exercises that help in strengthening bones. "Building bones through adequate calcium intake and exercises when you are young is an investment that will pay off years later with a reduced risk of hip and other fractures.

An inactive person should start these exercises slowly and gradually increase the intensity. Brisk walking, jogging, climbing stairs are especially good. Muscle building exercises are not recommended for people with osteoporosis. In pregnant, lactating, nursing, post-menopausal women and in men and women over 65 years, the requirement of calcium and vitamin D increases. Vitamin D can be obtained from eggs, liver or even spending about 15 minutes in the sunshine is good. Apart from calcium, Vitamin D, K, B6, B12 and minerals like magnesium, zinc, manganese and silicon are also important in strengthening bones. To prevent menopausal bone loss, estrogen replacement therapy, calcitonin, bisphosphonate, parathyroid hormone therapy and other medications should be considered," he says.

Orthopaedic and Joint Replacement Surgeon, Dr Dilip D. Tanna, says that the human body forms bones until the age of 35 years after which new bone formation is negligible. "This remains our highest bone mass. Post 35 years our bone mass remains steady until 45 - 50 years after which it gradually begins to lose bone mass due to menopause. Most women lose around one per cent of their bone mass each year post menopause. Osteoporosis can be detected only over a period of time with a few tests. Include a lot of calcium rich alternatives in your diet. These include dry beans, such as black-eyed peas, kidney beans and black beans, turnip greens, collard greens, broccoli, sardines, tofu and fortified orange juice. Almonds, sunflower and sesame seeds are also a rich source of calcium," says Dr Tanna.

Consultant Orthopedic Surgeon, Dr Sanjay Agarwala, concludes saying that that osteoporosis isn't always hereditary. "There can be a predisposition mediated through hormonal lack. The peak bone mass i.e. the amount and quality of bone is genetically linked. However, environmental factors and personal habits determine the final quality of bone. One needs to replenish stores of calcium and vitamin D and at times consider hormones that can make bones grow. One can prevent this

illness by going in for weight bearing exercises during young age and maintaining the intake of calcium and vitamin D," says Dr Agarwala.

Some common myths about Osteoporosis

- My mother didn't have it, so I won't get it.
- I'll worry about it after it later in life, I'm too young for it right now.
- Rich people don't get it since they eat well.
- I have a daily intake of 250 mg of calcium. (Minimum intake of 1200 -1500 mg is essential.)
- I have no time for exercises.