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Physical Therapy

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Osteoporosis - Overview and Prevention

Osteoporosis is a disease characterized by progressive loss of bone density. This results in thinning of bone tissue making one more susceptible to fractures, or broken bones. Although the incidence of osteoporosis is greater in women, men are also affected. Over ten million individuals in the United States today are affected by osteoporosis. It is a disease that is responsible for greater than 1.5 million fractures annually, making it a significant health care issue.



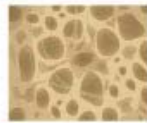
Normal bone



Close-up view



Bone with osteoporosis



Close-up view

Osteoporosis occurs when the body fails to produce enough new bone or when too much bone is reabsorbed by the body. Throughout life, new bone is formed and old bone is reabsorbed. During infancy, childhood, and adolescence new bone is developed faster than old bone is removed. As a result, bone strength is maintained and may also become denser. This process occurs until approximately age thirty. At this point peak bone mass is achieved. After this stage, bone re-absorption occurs in excess of bone formation resulting in weaker bone tissue.

Various risk factors are associated with the development of osteoporosis. These can be categorized into modifiable and non modifiable factors. Non modifiable risk factors include gender, ethnicity, body type, age, and past family history. Women are more susceptible to developing osteoporosis than men as are the elderly versus the young. Small "thin boned" body types are more at risk than larger "big boned" types. Caucasians and Asians are also at higher risk for developing osteoporosis than other ethnicities. Modifiable risk factors include inactive lifestyles, cigarette smoking, diets low in calcium and vitamin D, and low estrogen levels such that occur after menopause.

There are multiple ways to prevent the development of osteoporosis. Having a diet high in calcium and vitamin D is one important preventative measure. Calcium is important to maintain bone strength, however vitamin D plays a role in the absorption of calcium thus both are needed. Weight bearing exercises are another way to assist in maintaining strong bones. Bone tissue responds to the forces placed on them during exercise by becoming stronger. Lastly, avoiding cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption is one more way to prevent the onset of osteoporosis.

Its never too late to participate in an exercise program to help prevent or treat the signs and symptoms that are associated with osteoporosis. A Physical Therapist will design an exercise program that combines strengthening, stretching and postural exercises, safe and specific to your needs.

The information on this page is provided to you from Performance Physical Therapy. It is not intended to replace any information/treatment provided to you by your health care provider. Please feel free to check with your Physical Therapist if you have any questions about the information provided on this page.

We are here to help you reach your Peak Performance!

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