

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

Give Your Bones Every Advantage

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Even if you are *already* taking medication for your osteoporosis, there are still many other factors that are vitally important to your bone health. To help you remember what these are, the checklist below will help you get the most out of your osteoporosis treatment and your next bone health check-up with your doctor. By addressing *all* of the items in the lists you can more effectively manage your own bone health and reduce your risk of fracture *even further*.

Medications and Supplements

- Take your **medication** properly. Check Osteoporosis Canada's [Drug Treatments Fact Sheet](#) (on the OC website or call 1-800-463-6842) for more details, or talk to your pharmacist or your doctor to make sure you are taking your medication correctly.
- Take **vitamin D**. Take your vitamin D all year round and take the amount that is appropriate for your age group. Some people need more than what is generally recommended. If you are at high fracture risk, you may benefit from a blood test to see if you need more than the generally recommended amount of vitamin D.
- **Always** take **all** of your prescription and non-prescription (vitamins and supplements) **medications** to your medical appointments in their original containers. It is important for your doctor to see the ingredients, dosages, amounts, number of repeats and specific brands of medications that you are taking.

Lifestyle

- Don't **smoke**.
- Keep your **alcohol consumption** to an average of less than 3 alcoholic beverages per day.
- **Exercise** regularly. See the Osteoporosis Canada fact sheet on Physical Activity, visit OC's website or call us for some excellent tips on exercise.
- Eat a diet rich in **calcium**. See the Osteoporosis Canada fact sheet on Nutrition, visit OC's website or call us for details on dairy, calcium supplements and more.
- Make sure you eat a **well-balanced diet** with enough protein and fresh fruits and vegetables. Again, OC's fact sheet on [Nutrition](#) will help you with the details.

Falls Prevention

- Check your **vision**. Poor vision, bifocals (worn while exercising, walking or going up or down stairs) and cataracts contribute to falls and falls lead to fractures or broken bones.
- Wear **proper shoes** both inside and outside the home. Proper shoes are low and comfortable with a good tread on a rubber sole to prevent slipping. The soles should not be so thick that you cannot feel the ground underneath at all.
- Check your home for possible **slip and trip hazards**, such as clutter on the floor and stairs, scatter rugs, unravelled electrical cords, plush carpets, slippery bath tubs, etc. Make sure that you eliminate all of these potential “accidents”. If you need help with this, your doctor may be able to arrange a **home assessment** by an occupational therapist to ensure your home environment is safe.
- Avoid these three common causes of **dizziness**: (i) low blood pressure, (ii) low blood sugar and (iii) dehydration. You can do this by (i) getting your blood pressure checked to make sure it is not dropping too much, especially if you are on blood pressure medication (ii) not skipping meals and eating at regular time intervals to prevent low blood sugar and (iii) drinking plenty of water throughout the day to avoid dehydration. These easy measures will help you avoid falls and broken bones
- Tell your doctor if you still suffer from dizzy spells, have fallen, are afraid of falling, have poor balance or have difficulty getting up out of a chair. All of these problems may increase your **risk of falls** and fracture.
- **Do not ever** climb up onto furniture to reach high places.
- **Avoid** walking on icy, slippery, or uneven ground. If you have no choice but to walk on dangerous surfaces, do so with extreme caution.

General Health Issues

- See your doctor if you think that your **memory** or your **mood** are declining. Poor memory or low mood (that sometimes stem from dementia or depression but can be treated) may cause you to forget or neglect to eat well, to exercise or to take your vitamins and medications properly.
- Always **update** your doctor about any **changes** or new developments to your general health (such as a new broken bone, hormonal problems, rheumatoid arthritis, bowel disease, kidney disease, or a change in your family history etc.)

The tips outlined above are not just for those taking medications for osteoporosis. They are important for *everyone* who wishes to maintain their general health and to keep their bones healthy and strong. For those of you who have not yet required medication for osteoporosis, here are some *additional* tips for your bone health when you visit your doctor for a general health check-up.

- a) have a **weight measurement** because if you weigh less than 60 Kg you may need a BMD test
- b) have a **height measurement** with a comparison to a previous measurement to see if you have lost enough height to consider the possibility of spine fracture(s) and the need for a spine X-ray
- c) inform your doctor if you have taken a drug called **Prednisone** (a type of cortisone) within the past year
- d) inform your doctor about **any bones you may have broken** in the past, including how old you were and how it happened (eg. fell off a bike, car accident, tripped etc.)
- e) inform your doctor if one of your **parents ever broke their hip** (this is not the same as a hip replacement for arthritis)
- f) have a discussion with your doctor to assess your fracture risk and to see if you need a **bone mineral density (BMD) test**. You may benefit from a fracture risk assessment using the [FRAX or CAROC fracture risk assessment tools](#).

You can assist your busy doctor by going through these questions yourself, noting your answers to them and preparing a check-list or summary for your next bone health visit.

FUNNY BONE:

“ I have to walk early in the morning, before my brain figures out what I’m doing...”

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