

COPING

JULY 6, 2007

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

Importance of Physical Activity

Physical activity is an important factor in preventing osteoporosis, reducing falls and broken bones (fractures), and helping people with osteoporosis to remain active. Almost any type of physical activity has some benefit to health. In terms of osteoporosis, however, the best type of activity is:

- Activity that affects bone mass.
- Activity that improves balance and coordination. By reducing the risk of falling, you reduce your risk of fracture.
- Activity that improves flexibility and posture.

Activity that affects bone mass

Bone mass increases as a result of:

- The 'loading' that results from the force of gravity on bone, or
- Tension created by muscular activity.

Weight-bearing activity is a good example of the loading that results from the force of gravity. It requires that the legs support the entire weight of the body. Walking, running, line dancing, aerobics, hiking, racquet sports, etc. are all examples of weight-bearing activities.

Resistance/strength training is an example of the loading created by muscular activity. This type of exercise involves moving objects or your own weight to create resistance in order to stress a particular muscle group. This in turn can increase bone density, although the effect occurs only in the area involved in the exercise. Examples are weightlifting, tube exercises, rowing and wall pushups.

Activity that improves balance and coordination

Tai chi is one of the best exercises to improve balance and coordination and reduce falls. Other exercises include swimming and flexibility exercises.

Activity that improves flexibility and posture

For individuals with osteoporosis, maintaining flexibility and proper posture can reduce pain and enable you to do daily tasks more easily. There are many community exercise programs designed especially for people with osteoporosis. Osteoporosis Canada also has exercise resources that may be helpful.

Some exercise tips

When choosing an activity some things to consider are your fitness level, past experience with the activity, your current health and what activities you really enjoy. If you have osteoporosis, choose activities that are safe for you. You may want to consult a physiotherapist or occupational therapist to teach you how to safely perform your everyday activities. Avoid activities that increase your risk of falling, or that involve bending forward or twisting your spine.

Be back smart

- Don't store heavy objects on high or low shelves.
- Bend your hips and knees, not your back
- Keep your tummy muscles pulled in tight
- Keep the load close to your body
- Move your feet, don't twist your back

Many people wonder whether it is necessary to seek the advice of experts when beginning an exercise program. Your health status and your age will determine the kind of help that you need. Remember not to push yourself too hard as you begin an exercise program. Listen to your body.

For more information about physical activity check the Osteoporosis Canada web site at www.osteoporosis.ca

Funny Bone:

A sign on a tow truck said, "We don't want an arm and a leg, just your tows."

Remember:

It is important for you to eat a **healthy diet**, get some appropriate **exercise**, take your **calcium and vitamin D** and if your doctor has prescribed a **medication** don't forget to take it as directed.

COPING Newsletter will come to you every second Friday. We hope you enjoy it and find the information useful.

COPN would like to know what is going on in your area that would be of interest to people living with osteoporosis. E-mail us at copn@osteoporosis.ca.

Information contained in *COPING* Newsletter is not intended to replace medical advice. Please discuss your individual circumstances with your physician.

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JULY 20, 2007

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

ELEANOR MILLS - AN INSPIRATION

"Never give up!" is Eleanor's motto

On Mother's Day, 1993, the "Boney Express," with Eleanor Mills and her walker-chair out front, launched the Osteoporosis Canada Relay Walk from Victoria, B.C. The aim of the Walk was to raise awareness of the disease and to help others learn to prevent fractures.

"Osteoporosis has pursued and disabled women and men relentlessly for centuries," said Eleanor, then 79. "Now, when early diagnosis and preventive measures can be taken, it is our duty to get 'out there' and spread the news. We need to let people know about this disease before they have a fracture as I have."

Eleanor realized she had a serious problem in the late 1970s, when she noticed that the hem of her calf-length dress was suddenly down around her ankles. "That afternoon, I'd heard a very unusual crushing sound, and felt a vibration, as I awkwardly held onto some heavy grocery bags and tried to open the door to my home," she says. "The instant height loss was inexplicable. It was only later that I realized the sound I'd heard was the crushing of my spine. At the time there was no pain. That was to come later."

A Sunday afternoon stroll with a new walker-chair about 15 years later was Eleanor's inspiration for the idea of a cross-country effort to help others overcome the pain and loss of mobility from osteoporosis. "I got in touch with others I knew in the osteoporosis field and then I started training."

Eleanor spent two summers joining walkers in 130 communities across Canada, supported by local volunteers in each place. "Those who helped me were simply splendid," she says. "They cannot be praised sufficiently eloquently for helping me - a woman they had never heard of, and never met before."

She continued to encourage those with the disease, as well as their families and friends, and Osteoporosis Canada (OC) volunteers and staff to: "Never give up!"

Eleanor Mills, Patron of Osteoporosis Canada, died at her home in Toronto on October 5, 2004. A tireless supporter of OC and an inspiration to thousands of people with osteoporosis, Eleanor was well known and treasured by the osteoporosis community around the world. She will be greatly missed.

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In June of 2005, Osteoporosis Canada introduced an award to commemorate Eleanor's indomitable spirit. Known as the Eleanor Mills Inspiration Award, it is designed to acknowledge a volunteer who, like Eleanor, has embraced his/her own osteoporosis, and by doing so has inspired others with his/her determination, perseverance and optimism, and has given of his/herself to champion the cause.

Next issue we will feature the winner of the 2007 Eleanor Mills Inspiration Award.

Funny Bone:

How come the threat of showers postpones more yard chores than golf games?

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