



Osteoporosis Canada

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COPING
**The E-newsletter of the
Canadian Osteoporosis Patient Network (COPN)**

January, 2007

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Welcome to 2007, a new year.

Often, January is the month of new resolutions, of promises to the self to make changes or improvements in our lives. You may have made a resolution yourself.

COPN and this newsletter have made some resolutions as well. The newsletter will include more articles and/or electronic links to information about exercise, diet, research and supplementation. But the letter will also continue to discuss advocacy and health policy across Canada.

This is an excellent opportunity to perhaps start doing some of the things you have been thinking about doing in the past. For example, making time for regular exercise or improving our diet are two excellent ideas for self-improvement.

The combination of regular exercise, such as a brisk walk along with more fruits, vegetables and fluid milk every day is just about unbeatable for your well being.

Now, how can you really make your resolutions become reality?

Janet Polivy and Peter Herman, psychology professors at the University of Toronto, wrote an article in the journal, *American Psychologist* (Sept 2002: 677-689) entitled "If at First You Don't Succeed".

In it, they point out:

- Twenty-five per cent of New Year's resolutions will be abandoned in the first 15 weeks.
- The average number of times a New Year's resolution is made is 10.
- Those who manage to make a resolution that lasts for six months or more have often tried five or six times before finally succeeding.

You need to set realistic goals for yourself and attach reasonable time limits. In the above example of more fruit or vegetables, that in itself is not a realistic goal with a reasonable time limit.

Consider setting a goal of an apple every morning starting the day after your next grocery shop. This makes sense because you will need to buy some apples (for example) to achieve your goal.

As well, try to start thinking of milk, fruit and vegetables as snack foods and then use them that way. Indeed, all of us need to drink two glasses of milk or its equivalent (think yogurt, fortified soy beverages) everyday.

Walking is a great form of exercise. It can provide the right kind of movement to help maintain or even improve bone structure as well as improve balance and even cardiovascular fitness. On top of all that, it costs nothing to do. However, it is important to wear comfortable shoes that provide an appropriate amount of support and protection from the elements. And, while you are thinking about the elements don't forget to be sure the footwear has traction over slippery surfaces. There are products on the market nowadays that can be strapped on your boots to help prevent slipping (Marks Work Wearhouse and Mountain Equipment Co-Op are examples of where to find these items).

To get out walking more, park some distance from your destination or walk, get off a stop or two early if you take transit, or start small and just go around the block. And, of course the old reliable stand by - get a dog that needs you to take it for a walk at least twice a day. You will get built in companionship and probably meet some people this way too! Most municipalities and a great many shopping malls have walking groups. And if your area does not have one, then step up and start one! This will provide you with a gratifying and broadening experience.

Another idea to help your well being is keeping your mind active and engaged. There has been a good deal of recent research that seems to indicate significant benefits come from taking on some fairly simple things such as taking a different route into work every once in a while, playing Scrabble or solving crossword puzzles. For a real challenge try Cryptic Crosswords (not for the faint of heart!).

One thing is certain: It does not matter how old or young you might be, there are benefits to exercising your brain as well as your body.

All the best to you and yours as we live well with osteoporosis in 2007.

January 18, 2007

The COPN motto is "Living Well With Osteoporosis" and living well includes exercise. The benefit of regular and appropriate exercise can not be over emphasized. The following comments are based on columns by Dr Marla Shapiro in the Globe & Mail newspaper and materials from the National Osteoporosis Society in the U.K.

You can adopt a more active lifestyle at any age provided you begin with what you know and progress at an appropriate pace for your age, ability and current condition. For example, a recent diagnosis of vertebral fracture(s) would mean starting very carefully and proceeding only with your physician's guidance.

Not all forms of exercise stimulate bone. Those exercises that are recommended for heart disease will not necessarily reduce the risk of osteoporosis nor, obviously, help maintain or strengthen bone. Popular activities such as cycling or swimming are excellent exercise but they are not weight-bearing and have been found to have no effect on bone.

Instead, 'high impact' weight-bearing activities such as jogging or jumping are effective in young adults. Once past middle age, weight training or classes that include a variety of activities are good for people up to age 70.

Here are some things to consider before starting up your more active lifestyle.

Do not rush into unaccustomed exercise too quickly. Begin gradually with things you know you can do comfortably and then gradually increase the amount and intensity until you reach your target. But, remember this will take time.

A little muscle stiffness is okay. This signals you have done something new and different with your body. If you are extremely stiff, then this means you went too far too soon. But even this stiffness will pass in a few days. However, persistent pain is a sign of an over-use injury and you should stop that exercise until it heals.

Moderation - in all things. This is very good advice, especially for exercise and diet. A balanced approach is very important to maintain overall health.

Exercise regularly. A little and often is the way to proceed. Three times a week is a reasonable target for normal maintenance.

Clothing: Wear the appropriate shoes and comfortable clothes. The wrong kind of shoes in particular can lead to discomfort, pain and injuries.

Exercise in an environment that is comfortable and practical. You need space to move around and it needs to be kept at a comfortable temperature.

Warm up: A little very gentle stretching or 'practice' moves before you begin will help you avoid straining your muscles and creating extra stiffness.

Start easily with an exercise you know you can do comfortably. For example, if it is climbing stairs instead of taking the elevator, don't begin on the first day trying to climb 10 or 12 flights. Try one or two and gradually increase the number of steps each week.

Gradual improvement is the key. If you have a setback due to an injury or illness then begin again at a comfortable level not at where you left off.

Listen to what your body is telling you. If an exercise hurts, then STOP. Proper exercise will increase your breathing and it may cause you to sweat but it should never cause pain. If you are uncomfortable, slow down or take a rest. And, don't exercise if you are feeling unwell.

Stretching: Always after your warm up and again after your main exercise. But always stretch slowly and carefully. Don't bounce. Bouncing can cause damage.

Avoid:

Excessive forward bending of the back, such as with sit ups or touching toes with straight legs.

High impact exercise is not suitable if you have back or knee pain.

How much exercise is enough? Current recommendations are that an adult should expend about 1,000 calories a week to feel the benefits -- which translates to walking about an hour a day, five days a week. But you can exercise in small chunks, rather than a sustained hour, and still benefit.

It is important to find something that you like to do and will do.

If you have never worked out before, start with low-intensity exercise such as short walks or using very light weights, and gradually increase the intensity as well as how often and how long you do it.

Try to exercise as a family, and include your children to help them learn early in life that physical activity is not only healthy but fun. Basketball, baseball, bicycling, soccer and swimming are great examples of family activities -- and also great examples of how to combine aerobic exercise with a full-body workout.

FUNNY BONE:

A boy was bagging groceries at a supermarket. One day the store installed a machine for squeezing fresh orange juice. Intrigued, the young man asked if he could be allowed to work the machine, but his request was denied. Said the store manager, "Sorry, kid, but baggers can't be juicers."

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis. It is important for you to continue with a program of health diet, appropriate exercise/activity, calcium and vitamin D and/or prescription drugs as directed by your physician. If you do have a prescription, follow the directions.

What's happening in your area? 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.