

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

My Journey to Wellness by Cheryl Bulycz

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Fracture Fact:

After a diagnosis of the source of pain has been made, there are many professionals who can assist with pain management, including family physicians, pain specialists, physiotherapists with training in rehabilitation therapy and massage therapists.

Key Messages

1. Managing osteoporosis does not have to be a one-person job! Seek out resources where available.
2. The pain of a fracture may force you into unexpected life changes. It's important to listen to what your body needs.
3. Osteoporosis, like any chronic condition, requires consistent monitoring and developing good habits to maintain your health.

In the spring of 2014, back pain began to affect my life. I had experienced backaches for many years so I figured it was just the usual. The pain became worse over the summer instead of settling down as it always had in the past. By September I was experiencing painful muscle spasms in my lower back. I also had difficulty with everyday movement - walking, standing, getting in and out of my car, walking up and down stairs.

So it was off to the doctor, who ordered X-rays and referred me to a bone specialist. The X-rays showed compression fractures up and down my spine. The specialist diagnosed osteoporosis.

I was in shock. At only 59 I was, as many people are, under the impression that osteoporosis is for old people, especially women. My first question was "What can I do to improve my health and manage this pain?" My specialist suggested a three-year program of injections every six months. Meanwhile, I accepted help from the wellness program at the school where I teach and began to receive therapy from a physical therapist. The wellness program provided a lumbar support chair for work and counselling sessions to assist my transition to these life changes.



Cheryl Bulycz (r) at the Western Canada Women's Show

By October pain forced me to start working half time for the rest of that school year. I found that even working half time was exhausting because of the difficulty managing my pain. It was constant, causing me to have even more difficulty with walking, stairs, doing everyday chores at home, bending. By the time I got home in the mid afternoon I was done for the day. During this time I worked hard to walk every day, even if only a short distance, before pain became too much. I was able to walk a little farther each day, which helped with pain relief and a sense of self-management.

I started the 2015/16 school year on half time again but by early October was unable to handle the pain as well as the stress of changes at work. I was advised to take a leave. Luckily I had sufficient sick days to use up so was fine financially and could concentrate on wellness.

I could now attend Osteofit classes (available only in BC) and osteoporosis support group meetings, where I learned so much from the speakers who came to educate us. I took all the advice given - walking and sitting properly, better eating habits and exercises to improve and strengthen my core. I learned about supplementing my diet with only what I need - calcium if my diet didn't provide enough and vitamin D every day all year round. Having been interested in good nutrition for many years, I began to read books about the health benefits of eating well. I also focused on balance in my life: emotional, physical, nutritional; spending time with my family and friends; and being more physically active.

I felt stronger and the pain began to recede. I felt in charge of my health. In April 2017 I received my final injection. By now I was using very little pain medication. I found that if I was hurting, doing stretches and/or going for a walk did the trick more often than not.

In September 2017 I went for a follow-up bone mineral density test to see how the injections and wellness program had worked. The news brought tears to my eyes - I had regained 10% of my bone mass from three years before. All the hard work paid off in big ways!

March 2018

My story was originally written in the fall of 2017 - I was feeling strong and well. Feeling that well, I began to make mistakes: picking up a grandchild, moving too fast, bending to pick up objects that were too heavy, generally being less careful.

In January 2018 I began to feel terrible back pain, this time over all of my back, not just in the lower section as before. Thinking it was a simple pulled muscle I rested it, heated it and took it easier. The pain became much worse over the next few weeks, so off to the doctor I went. She ordered X-rays that showed four new compression fractures. I went on an opiate pain killer but all it did was dull the pain. I also went back on my osteoporosis medication, determined to reduce the risk of more fractures.

Time is my friend and that's what it's taking to heal, very slowly. I am pretty much homebound and spend much of my day in bed, resting my body so it can heal. I am lucky to have caring people in my life to help with heavy things like picking up groceries, putting in a load of laundry and just keeping me company now and then. I am on the mend but still cannot stand, sit or walk far at all. It's been a very painful journey this time and has taught me a lesson. I must forever be careful of my condition, and my intention is to return to my strength and enjoy life while being vigilant of my health.

November 2018

It has been over 10 months of chronic pain. I often use a cane now when I walk. Two of my compressions have worsened. I am taking a self (pain) management course for six weeks to learn strategies to deal with chronic pain. I am very careful with most activities and am quite tired by late afternoon. Lying down for an hour to rest my back is helpful.

On a positive note, I have been invited to be the patient sitting at the table with a group of medical professionals who are doing research to improve patient care for people with multiple spinal compression fractures. We have worked to create questionnaires for patients to respond to as they progress from diagnosis towards wellness. It has been wonderful to be able to share my experiences towards better care for other sufferers. I look forward to continuing to work with this group over the coming months.

Overall, my quality of life is good. I am able to do most of the activities I want to do, with the exception of running, twisting, lifting anything heavy, standing or sitting too long or climbing too many stairs. I have wonderful people around me who understand and treat me as normal, which is so important to me.

Thank you for reading my story. My journey to wellness continues

We Welcome Your Feedback

- Have a question?
- Is there an osteoporosis-related topic that you would like to see featured in the newsletter?
- Looking for a great volunteer opportunity?

Please contact us by calling Osteoporosis Canada's toll-free number **1-800-463-6842** or emailing copn@osteoporosis.ca.

BONE MATTERS
Take charge of your bone health

WEBINAR D-lemmas of D!

DATE & TIME
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2019
1:30 - 2:30 PM ET

FEATURED SPEAKER:
STEPHANIE A. ATKINSON, PHD, DSC(HON), FCAHS
• Professor, Department of Pediatrics, McMaster University, McMaster Children's Hospital

DR. ATKINSON WILL ANSWER QUESTIONS SUCH AS

- Vitamin D – why do we need it?
- Does the new Canada's Food Guide provide good nutrition for bone health?
- Is it necessary to have Vitamin D status measured?
- Can I prevent bone fractures by taking extra vitamin D?
- How do we make sure to get enough?

TO REGISTER
osteoporosis.ca/bonematters

OSTEOPOROSIS



Upcoming Presentation D-lemmas of D!

Vitamin D is a crucial nutrient for bone health. Join us for a virtual presentation with Dr. Stephanie Atkinson where she'll discuss:

- Vitamin D – why do we need it?
- Does the new Canada's Food Guide provide good nutrition for bone health?
- Is it necessary to have Vitamin D status measured?
- Can I prevent bone fractures by taking extra Vitamin D?
- How do we make sure to get enough?

This presentation will air live on **Wednesday, March 20**
from **1:30-2:30PM ET**.

For more information and to register, [click here](#).

We're excited to host this Bone Matters presentation on a **new** platform to improve the viewer experience.

FUNNY BONE:

The shinbone is a device for finding furniture in a dark room

OC Recipe of the Issue

SALMON AND CHICKPEA PATTIES

Preparation Time: 10 mins

Cook Time: 10 mins

Serves: 6

Calcium: 15% DV*



Enjoy canned salmon for a family meal easily by extending it with canned beans. These easy cakes are great to enjoy over warm greens or tucked into a whole wheat bun as a burger.

Ingredients

1 can (213 g) wild red pacific/sockeye salmon, drained
1 can (19 oz/540 mL) no salt added chickpeas, drained and rinsed
2 green onions, chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced and divided
2 tbsp (25 mL) light mayonnaise
1/4 tsp (1 mL) hot pepper flakes
1/4 tsp (1 mL) dried marjoram leaves or dill weed
1 cup (250 mL) bran flakes, crushed
1 pkg (11 oz/300 g) baby spinach, rinsed with water clinging to leaves

Preparation

In a large bowl, using a potato masher, mash together salmon, including bones and chickpeas until fairly smooth. Stir in green onions, half of the garlic, mayonnaise, hot pepper flakes and marjoram.

Shape mixture into 6 patties and coat in bran flakes. Place on parchment paper lined baking sheet. Bake in preheated 425 F (220 C) oven for about 10 minutes or until heated through.

Meanwhile, in a large skillet wilt spinach with remaining garlic. Divide among plates and top with patties.

For more information, [click here](#) to view the recipe online.

*The percentage of calcium is based on the Osteoporosis Canada's daily calcium requirement for people under 50 years of age of 1000 mg.