

## COPING

'A newsletter from COPN'

February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009

*Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!*

Living well means taking care of your self. 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.

*Thought for today:*

Yesterday is history  
Tomorrow's a mystery  
Today is a gift  
That's why it's called the present.

### Virtual Forum!

Coming soon to a computer near you!!!  
Osteoporosis Medications: Benefits and Risks

COPN is offering the inaugural virtual forum on March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1:00 p.m. eastern time. Mark this date on your calendar and plan to join us. Dr. Angela Cheung will be talking about medications, the benefits and the risks; a topic of great interest to those of us living with osteoporosis.

Registration is limited to 100 people for this initial forum. Everyone must pre-register to participate. Just go to the Osteoporosis Canada website [www.osteoporosis.ca](http://www.osteoporosis.ca) and click on COPN Virtual Education Forum under upcoming events. An email will be sent out with more information once the registration is available on line.

How does a virtual forum work? A person registers in advance and is given the directions for joining the forum. During the actual forum, the person goes on the Internet to the location given and logs in. The speaker will appear on the computer screen along with the PowerPoint presentation. There will be an opportunity to type in your question for the speaker to answer during the Q & A time at the end of the presentation.

### Looking Your Best: Part II

Do you remember this question from October?

**Q:** My back has become rounded from osteoporotic fractures. Many of my clothes don't fit well and I feel dumpy. What can I do?

Many people said they enjoyed the article on fashion and one woman wrote in to suggest that a good tailor or seamstress can do wonders. This might also be the best solution for the man who wrote asking for suggestions. Sorry, sir, I wish I

had more to offer you and the many other men whose backs are no longer straight.

Further to the recommendation about a seamstress or tailor, alterations can be done on most clothing. It can be as simple as having darts put in the back of a blouse or hemming a skirt. An experienced seamstress or tailor can also make an outfit for you.

It may be a worthwhile investment to have one or two special pieces, like a good suit or traditional dress custom-made. With several well-fitting pieces and the creative use of accessories, you can have a very elegant and classic look that goes from day into evening.

If expense is an issue, ask your friends if they know of anyone who sews. Sewing patterns are now being developed for the more mature figure. A person on a fixed income, such as a retiree or a fashion student, may welcome the chance to earn some extra money and the cost may be less than a traditional tailor.

The first article stated that there are five basic steps to dressing well:

1. Choose silhouettes and colours that complement your personal style.
2. Assess your current wardrobe for comfort and safety.
3. Accessorize to highlight your natural assets.
4. Find the design elements that work best with your body shape.
5. Select clothes with these design elements in mind.

Today we will speak briefly about assessing your current wardrobe for comfort and safety and then look at some fun accessories.

**Safety:** Are your skirts and pants hemmed so they will not catch your heel? Do tops allow freedom of arm and shoulder movement? Are shoes comfortable with non-skid soles? Is your handbag too heavy?

As we mentioned above, many of the clothes in your closet may be perfectly usable, if altered to fit your body or worn in a slightly different way. For instance, wearing an outfit of uniform colour creates a long, lean line, creating the illusion of length and added height. Use of colour can also help focus the eye on your best assets. For example, patterns and bright colours work well near the face, especially with scarves. (Editor's note: To make things even better, scarves are a hot fashion item this year and the stores have a wonderful assortment of colours, textures, and styles.)

**Using scarves** is one of the easiest ways to disguise shoulder and back curvature. A colourful or patterned scarf can help you feel great and update the look of an outfit. A scarf can fill in a gaping collar or neckline. A bold scarf draped around the neck, flowing down the back will give you a longer profile.

Two basic shapes for scarves are the square and the rectangle, also known as the oblong. A shawl or cape can also be used to disguise curvature. Here are some basic, creative ways you can tie a scarf or shawl. If you do not have the

size used in the example, try these techniques with a size you already have. Have fun!

Modified ascot: This style is best used with very soft scarves, such as rayon, chiffon or silk, which will allow you to play with the drape of the scarf within the neck area. It looks good with collars, scooped or v-necklines. Use a 30" square.

- Step 1. Fold scarf in half, with the point facing downward.
- Step 2. Drape scarf across your front to form a triangle
- Step 3. Bring ends around the back of the neck and cross over.
- Step 4. Bring ends to the front and tie a knot at the centre of the front of the neck. Style the drape to fit the collar area or tuck into your blouse or blazer.

Loosely draped scarf: Here you can use any type of fabric. The fun here is playing with the knot and the drape to achieve the desired look. Also, a loose drape will fall nicely over just about anything. Just think of how a beautiful floral scarf, draped over a solid coloured dress, will draw the eye upward creating height and enhancing your look. Use a 30" or 33" square scarf.

- Step 1. Lay scarf flat and fold over, leaving a space of 2 inches from the point to the extended scarf edge.
- Step 2. Drape around the back of the shoulders, with points in the center of the back.
- Step 3. Bring the two ends to the front, adjust the drape of the scarf around the neck area to a complimentary style and knot.

Neck drape in rectangle: The rectangle shape in a soft chiffon, very light silk, or a beautiful lace can add romance to any outfit. This look is wonderful for evening wear or to dress up a basic outfit. There are three variations of this technique.

A. Back neck drape: (oblong 48" x 10")

- Step 1. Take the center and place at front of neck
- Step 2. Let the ends fall over both shoulders and drape down back

B. Back Neck Twist: (oblong 68" x 22")

- Step 1. Fold rectangle in half lengthwise. In front, drape around neck and match ends. Loop one end over the other to form a soft tie in front.
- Step 2. Twist loop over shoulder to position in the back. Let ends of scarf drape at center of the back.

C. Stock-tie: (oblong 70" x 33")

- Step 1. Fold rectangle in half lengthwise. In front, drape around neck and match ends.
- Step 2. Loop one end over the other to form a soft tie.

Step 3. Crisscross ends and loosely loop one end over and under. Pull ends until loop fits front neck. Softly fold remaining lengths over each shoulder.

The profile of this twist both balances and adds softness to the curvature of the body. Try pinning a brooch to one side of the center front to help keep it in place.

**Shawl peasant style:** A shawl is a great treatment to complement a coat, dress or a suit. The shawl is wonderful in all types of fabrics such as knit, woven challis or lace. The outside edge can be decorated with fringe, lace or ruffle. The shawl can also be used as a wrap for evening wear. This look adds fullness and balance for sloping shoulders. (48" square)

Step 1. Lay shawl flat and fold over, leaving a space of 3" from the point to extended scarf edge.

Step 2. Drape over shoulders with point at center back.

Step 3. Throw right point across neck and over shoulder. Loosely drape left point across front and over shoulder. Shawl can lie on side of shoulder or drape completely over the shoulder.

Step 4. Pin a brooch where desired to add style and hold shawl in place.

**Jewellery:** Another way to fill in the neckline is lightweight beads or an interesting necklace. A brooch, pinned to the breast or below the shoulder, will catch the eye and draw it away from sloping shoulders, especially if it is worn against a solid colour blouse or blazer. Earrings help to frame the face. Long and dangling bracelets and necklaces should be worn with caution as they can get hooked on things and pull you off balance.

**Belts:** Waistlines are often sacrificed in women who have osteoporosis. For this reason, many women forgo belts completely when they develop the protruding stomach that often accompanies the curving of the back in osteoporosis. However, some women have found that wearing a narrow or chain belt, slung low on the hips actually lengthens the waistline. This looks especially good with a tunic top or top and bottom of a uniform colour. Avoid anything that cinches the waist. This look breaks the long line you are trying to achieve and is not very comfortable.

**Bags:** Keeping your hands free and readily accessible is important in maintaining your balance. Unfortunately, a heavy shoulder bag can cut into your back, cause pain, and possibly throw you off balance. Your doctor may have already cautioned you that carrying heavy bags can lead to a vertebral fracture. Some women find a lightweight backpack comfortable. A backpack is designed to work with the contours of the human body, distributes weight evenly, and removes weight from the shoulders. Leather can be heavy so look for nylon and canvas styles. A fanny pack also leaves your hands free. For dressier occasions, try a

small cloth handbag with a lightweight shoulder strap. Be sure to use your pockets to distribute small items. This will keep your handbag lighter.

**Hats:** Hats are a wonderful way to frame the face, camouflage the shoulders and add balance to the body. Hats can also protect you from ultraviolet light in the summer and keep you warm in the winter. However, some hats can obstruct your field of vision. For some women with osteoporosis, changes in posture bring the neck forward and gaze of the eyes downward. Make sure that your vision is not further obstructed by a large brim.

**Shoes:** Comfortable, flat or low-heeled shoes are a must for women with osteoporosis. Rubber, and other non-skid soles increase surefootedness and balance. For some, slip-ons may be easier to put on than lace-ups. Avoid extreme high heels, platforms, or mules that could cause you to trip, fall and possibly fracture. Wide-toe styles can increase comfort. Look for runners with Velcro closures or try elastic laces. If you have serious foot problems, check out specialty shoe stores or ask your doctor whether or not orthotic inserts in your shoes may help. Remember that comfort, surefootedness, and balance are key.

**Undergarments:** Severe back curvature can make it difficult to find undergarments that fit comfortably. Look for specialty bras with adjustable crossed back straps or longer bra straps. You can take your bra to a seamstress or alter it yourself by adding elastic extensions to the back straps. Front hooks are easier for those who have restricted back movement. Some women find a *long-line* bra with front hooks and midriff control panels to be comfortable. If you have stomach protrusion, be aware that wide elastic band found on the bottom of some types of bras could cause some discomfort, particularly if you are short-waisted.

Excerpts taken from 'Style Wise: a fashion guide for women with osteoporosis'. The tips emerge from a project founded by the United States National Osteoporosis Foundation in partnership with New York's Fashion Institute of Technology.

*Funny Bone: What do you get if you cross a four-leaf clover with poison ivy? A rash of good luck*

**COPN WEEKLY** will come to you every second Friday. We hope you enjoy it and find the information useful. Don't forget to log on to [www.osteoporosis.ca](http://www.osteoporosis.ca) for up to date information.

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