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**Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!**

## Dress Your Best – In Seven Steps

As we age, life often becomes more challenging. It can be difficult to feel as good as we wish to feel because of declining health and the development of chronic medical conditions that slow us down, impair our memory or judgment, reduce our physical strength or agility, or cause pain. It can also be challenging to look as good as we wish to look because of greying hair, wrinkles in our skin, or a change in body shape.

Just like our general health, our appearance and body image are closely related to our self-esteem. Some of us are able to cope with the aging process more easily than others, but the main challenge is to stay positive. Otherwise, we are at risk of isolating ourselves from the company of others, eating more, exercising less, and even developing depression and other related conditions, which only make matters worse.

Osteoporosis is a chronic medical condition that can slow us down by breaking our bones, causing pain and making us fearful of our daily activities. To add insult to injury, it can also affect our physical appearance by resulting in height loss, a hump in the back (kyphosis), stooped shoulders and a protruding abdomen. Why does this happen? If we lose height, (which usually results from spine fracture(s)) we get shorter.

As this happens, we may develop a hunch back or kyphosis with a forward stooping of the shoulders. Losing height causes our lower ribs to move closer to the pelvis, which results in less room in the abdomen for the intestines. These then protrude forward, giving one the appearance of having gained weight around the middle.

Ultimately, our clothing may no longer fit as well as it used to and new clothes may fit and look awkward. If this describes you, take heart, for you are not alone. We, at COPN, understand this, and while we cannot change your body, we have come up with some simple suggestions for your wardrobe to help you look and feel your personal best.

### **Step ONE - Old Clothes**

Go to your closet and take a critical look at the garments and accessories you already have (shoes, belts, scarves, jewelry, hats, gloves, etc.). Favourite dresses or pants that are now too long can be shortened. If a dress or blouse is now gaping at the back of the neck, it can be altered to make it fit better and be more comfortable. Depending on the style, you may be able to shorten a dress or blouse by gathering it with a belt or scarf at the waist. This will also make your waist look slimmer.

## Fracture Fact:

Comfortable, low-heeled shoes that provide good support can help to prevent falls

If an older outfit fits well but looks bland you can give it more "pop" by accessorizing it with new costume jewelry, a complementary scarf or hat or a new purse or shoes. By altering a favourite old garment, you not only save on money but also on the time it takes to shop for something new and the frustration of not finding it.

### **Step TWO - New Clothes**

If you are shopping for new clothes, stay away from dresses unless they are made for the petite figure. You will probably have more success co-ordinating separate bottoms (skirts or pants) with tops (blouses, T-shirts or blazers), especially if you are a different size in your upper body than your lower body. These can all be quite flattering if a classic or simple style is chosen.

For example, a high waisted or A-line or princess cut dress or top with a slightly flaring skirt beneath the bust line will hide a protruding abdomen much better than a fitted, narrow cut sheath dress. A low waisted dress may also be a good option because it will flow from the shoulders giving less emphasis to the waist and abdomen. Low waisted garments tend to go well with long necklaces or scarves as accessories. Try to avoid wearing dresses with a gathered waist, as this will accentuate rounded shoulders or a protruding abdomen.

In general, your new clothes should not be too obviously gaping, pulling or sagging. Adding some new accessories to old clothes or old accessories to new clothes will give a lift to all your outfits.

### **Step THREE - Tops**

If you have a kyphosis (hump back) remember never to let the curve on your back get the better of you. Always keep your posture as straight as possible. This will not only enhance your appearance but may also keep you from becoming more stooped. Any type of top or blouse can be accessorized by wearing a complementary or matching scarf tied around the shoulders to detract from any form of kyphosis.

For someone with a marked kyphosis, a garment may gape outwardly at the back neckline as the garment flares away from the body in a tent like fashion. This may be remedied by adding a few darts in the right places. In addition, the back hemline of the garment may seem shorter than the front hemline, all due to the fact that you are somewhat bent over.

This, too, may be remedied by adding a belt and pulling some of the fabric on the front of the top up and over the belt in order to shorten the front hemline. If these tricks are too difficult to do or don't work, you may be better off replacing that garment with something else that does. Adding shoulder pads to a top or dress will give you a more tailored look that may also make a kyphosis barely visible.

Vests are another option that can add elegance and the illusion of height while elongating and slimming the appearance of the body. The back neck line of most vests is low so will not gape if you have a kyphosis. Here again, a scarf can add a special effect.

### **Step FOUR - Scarves**

Scarves and shawls are always in fashion and the range of shapes, sizes, colours and methods of tying them make them ideal accessories. A complementary scarf or shawl worn the right way can hide many bodily imperfections like kyphosis. A multicolored or patterned scarf worn over a plain top will take attention away from the curve in your back.

If you have internet access, Google "scarves" under images for a vast array of ideas. If you search "scarves" under YouTube, you will get several live demonstrations of different methods of tying a scarf. Bookstores and libraries also carry books on the art of scarf tying. If you are purchasing a new scarf, why not ask the saleslady to show you various ways you may tie or wear it? Practise tying your scarf in front of a mirror several days before you need to dress up, in order to achieve a polished look. Practising often will make you quick and efficient with the art of scarf tying.

### **Step FIVE - Jewelry**

Jewelry is another accessory that can flatter and detract attention from other aspects of your body such as a kyphosis. In combination with a scarf or on its own, inexpensive, well-chosen costume jewelry can dress up the simplest of outfits to make them look stunning. With careful selection, you can look and feel good about yourself. It will be amazing what you can accomplish with a little creativity.

## Step SIX - Bottoms

If your waistline has changed, skirts and pants may no longer fit well if at all. If the garment has extra seam width, it can be let out to accommodate the enlarged waist. If this is not possible and you need to replace your pants or skirts, choose garments with an elastic or adjustable waist. Maternity slacks or skirts are another option because they are expandable, comfortable, and take on the shape of your body; and what's more, maternity styles are so good these days, nobody can guess what you are wearing!

## Step SEVEN - Shoes

Last, but definitely not least, it is important that everyone, but especially those of us with osteoporosis, give very careful consideration to our indoor and our outdoor footwear, because the type of shoes or slippers we wear can increase or decrease our risk of falls. Fewer falls means fewer fractures, so when it comes to shoes and slippers, safety and comfort should be given greater consideration than style, fashion or convenience. Fortunately, for most of us, there is a vast array of shoe colours and styles that are currently available to satisfy both our tastes and our safety needs.

So what is the best type of footwear that will reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls? To maximize safety, all footwear should:

- 1) be secured on your feet, either with shoe laces, a buckle, a Velcro closure, or any system that will ensure that the shoe or slipper cannot slip off or fall off your feet. This is especially true of slippers worn indoors, where most people tend to fall.
- 2) be the right size for you. Footwear that is too large can be easily tripped over even while you are wearing it. This means that ladies should not wear their husbands' shoes for a "quick trip outside" just because it may be more convenient.
- 3) have a rubber tread on the sole to prevent slipping.
- 4) have a sole that is not too thick. Very thick soles can make the shoe too bouncy, which may affect your balance. They can also make it difficult to feel the texture of the ground underneath, which can also affect your balance.
- 5) have a heel that is sturdy and not too high. Thin, high heels make it more challenging to maintain good balance and they increase the risk of "turning" an ankle or falling.

Some suggestions for indoor footwear include a light weight sandal or a pair of sneakers. Sneakers are light weight, comfortable, low, have a rubber tread, and tie on your feet with laces. Sneakers can also be worn out of doors, are inexpensive, look great with slacks, shorts and capris, and come in a vast array of colours that will match any outfit.

For a dressier look, a shoe with a low, slightly tapered heel or a low wedge will look great with almost any outfit. A wedge style is often more stable and usually more comfortable than a heel style shoe. Wedges are available in all kinds of colours and styles, including closed shoes, sandals, and even sneaker wedges.

## TIPS FOR MEN

Most men, regardless of age, also want to look their best. Men's wardrobes are simpler in that they mostly consist of shirts, jackets and pants, affording less variety than women's clothing. A man with a kyphosis may be able to purchase a shirt a little larger than his usual size, to prevent gaping in the back. The larger shirt will also be better able to accommodate a protruding abdomen. If the collar is a little too large, a scarf worn within the collar, instead of a tie, will add flair and will also distract from the kyphosis.

To prevent a new shirt from looking baggy, a man may choose a more fitted or tailored shirt. Many men's shirts now have spandex in them for that more fitted look. Alternatively, a baggy shirt can also be altered to fit better. When buying a new shirt try to get ones that have a yoke, as this will accommodate the hump; with the addition of two darts in the lower part of the body of the shirt and a scarf tied inside the collar, men can also look and feel good about themselves. If the kyphosis is more pronounced, a vest or a collarless jacket may do well.

For more casual wear, perhaps the best tops or shirts for men are those made with knitted fabrics as these stretch and fit better all around, and can be worn over pants or shorts, instead of being tucked in, which helps hide a protruding abdomen. For example, golf shirts, crew necks, polo necks, V necks and other knitted shirts and sweaters are less likely to emphasize a curved back.

Blazer style jackets are usually slightly longer and a well-fitting one will tend to hide a back curvature or a protruding abdomen. Wearing these open rather than buttoned up works well, and they can be combined with a scarf or a nice tie for a dressier look.

If you have favourite pants or jackets that can be altered to fit you better, most men's clothing stores and dry cleaning facilities will do alterations for a nominal fee. If purchasing new pants or shorts, consider those with an elasticized or adjustable waist. If you wear a top or shirt over these instead of tucked in, that will not only be even more comfortable, but will also tend to hide a protruding abdomen.

As for shoes, many sporting goods stores sell black athletic footwear that is very comfortable and looks very similar to a dress shoe so men need not sacrifice comfort and safety for style.

Encourage yourself to browse through men's stores, look at window displays and try on different types of garments. You will never know how you will look in something until you try it on. Try to shop for better quality garments (not necessarily expensive ones), as these usually fit better than those of lesser quality. Remember that by changing your accessories, men as well as women will look great without feeling as though they are wearing the same outfits all the time.

By spending a little time and using your creativity, you can look great, whatever your body shape or size, and will take you one step closer to living well with osteoporosis.

With thanks to Ina Ilse, a founding member of COPN and volunteer with Osteoporosis Canada.

## Upcoming Virtual Education Forum

### Osteoporosis Medications: Benefits and Risks in 2013

- **Wednesday, October 16, 2013**
- **1:30 to 3:00pm EDT**
- **Speaker:** Dr. Sandra Kim, MD, MSc, FRCPC, Women's College Hospital

### Men and Osteoporosis: So you think it can't happen to you?

- **Friday, November 8, 2013**
- **1:30 to 3:00pm EST**
- **Speaker:** Jonathan D. Adachi MD, FRCPC, St. Joseph's Healthcare - McMaster University

**Registration Opens Today!**

[Click here](#) for registration information.

**FUNNY BONE:** Why did the golfer have an extra pair of pants? In case he got a hole in one!



## A Message from our Sponsor

Judith Blucheau, RD, Dietitian

### **Cheese: an integral part of a healthy diet**

Cheese can be a higher source of fat compared to other milk products, but its overall nutritional value makes it a useful food.

Although it is important to limit fat intake in our diets, it is also important to get all the nutrients we need for our bodies to function. Along with other milk products, cheese is a good source of calcium and protein, both necessary for bone health.

There is a wide variety of cheeses on the market that have various fat contents. Simply choose the one that best suits your needs and tastes by reading the nutrition facts table.

**To learn more about milk products and to discover our dietitians' recipes, go to [getenough.ca](http://getenough.ca).**

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