

How You Can Prevent Osteoporosis

by Lee Albert, NMT

Osteoporosis can be a devastating disease, but the good news is that it's preventable. In my practice as a Neuromuscular therapist, I see many clients who have been diagnosed with this condition. With a little bit of knowledge and a little bit of work I believe that osteoporosis can be prevented and sometimes even reversed.

Here are my recommendations for minimizing the impact of this common medical condition.

Osteoporosis is a common condition that affects over 40 million people in the U.S. It means your bones are becoming more brittle and less dense. In my opinion osteoporosis is a wasting disease. If you were ever in a hospital bed for an extended period of time you would clearly see your muscles starting to atrophy and becoming smaller. They are wasting away. The same thing is happening to your bones except you can't see it. They are started to atrophy and becoming more brittle.

Osteoporosis is often called a silent disease because there are often no symptoms that one experiences. To determine if you have osteoporosis see your doctor. There are tests to determine if you have this disease.

Research has shown that weight bearing exercise can prevent and even reverse osteoporosis. Yes, getting enough minerals and vitamins like calcium, magnesium and vitamin D are important, but without the exercise component I believe they are marginally effective.

The exercise does not need to be anything fancy. Brisk walking 20-30 minutes a day will be a big help. A mini trampoline also known as a rebounder is very effective.

It is the jarring motion when you are walking or jumping that sends the signal to the bones to become stronger.

Gardeners who start their seeds indoors know that when the seeds start to sprout they should put them in front of a fan. If they don't, the stems get very weak and cannot hold up the plant. When the plant sways in the breeze from the fan it is getting the signal to grow the stems stronger.

Like wise our bones need a signal to get stronger. It is the same signal the muscles need to get stronger - exercise.

Before starting any exercise program, please check with your health care provider to make sure it is safe to do so.

Many clients who come to see me have their shoulders rounded and their head is protruding forward. This is not because they are aging, it is because they have practiced this posture their whole life. The biggest culprit is sitting. When sitting in a chair most people let their lower back round out thus pushing their head and shoulders forward. After 50 years of practicing this sitting posture they have shaped their bodies to this abnormal position. This crooked posture is not good for bone health either.

To help correct this I recommend three practices.

First - whenever you are going to sit for a long time you should use a small cushion rolls up in the small curve in your lower back to help reintroduce the natural curve and to bring you head back over your shoulders. I have a short, free video on the home page of my website that shows you how to accomplish this. In addition to being good for your bones it will also take the strain off your back and neck muscles.

Second - practice the "rowing exercise".

Stand up straight with your arms hanging normally at your side. Raise both arms straight out in front of you so the arms are parallel to the ground. Pretend you are holding two oars in your hands. Pull your elbows backwards and squeeze your shoulder blades together. Keep your shoulder blades squeezed together for about 2 seconds. Bring your arms back out in front of you parallel to the ground again to the starting position. Do 10 of these rowing motions 3 times a day. This will strengthen the muscles between your shoulder blades and help give you better posture which will help both your bones and your muscles.

Third - get up and move as much as possible.

Movement helps the bones get stronger. Sitting has been described as the new smoking as far as your health is concerned. Excessive sitting is a major factor in osteoporosis and many other conditions in the body.

Keep moving!