



Building Stronger Bones **By: Kristin Jennings, PT**

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Millions of people around the world have been diagnosed with low bone density, osteopenia, or osteoporosis and many more will be subject to this condition as our general population continues to age. Osteoporosis is a bone disease characterized by low bone mass and deterioration of bone tissue, predisposing a person to an increased risk of fracture. It affects one in four women and one in eight men. In the US today, 55% of people 50 years of age and older have osteoporosis, which contributes to millions of fractures.

There are several things you can do to lower your risk of bone damage from osteoporosis. Healthy lifestyle choices may help prevent bone loss and fractures. Calcium and vitamin D are important parts of your diet and you should consult with your physician for their daily intake recommendations. The use of tobacco, alcohol, and excess caffeine and soda consumption can interfere with your body's ability to absorb calcium and contribute to weak bones. Your physician should also be consulted regarding the many medications available to treat osteoporosis.

Exercise is vital to strong bones, and your osteoporosis treatment and prevention plan should include physical therapy. A physical therapist will work with you to develop an exercise plan that involves weight bearing exercises to help strengthen your bones, and balance exercises to prevent falls to help lower your risk of fracture. Posture exercises and body mechanics education to help decrease stress on the spine will also be an integral part of your treatment plan.

If you have concerns about osteoporosis, consult your physician and physical therapist to develop a comprehensive prevention and treatment plan.

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