

Osteoporosis— The Silent Killer

By Rick Pack, R.Ph.

May is National Osteoporosis Month, and it's important to be very aware of this deadly disease:

- One of every two women and one of every eight men over age 50 will suffer an osteoporosis related fracture.
- 50% of hip fracture sufferers will never walk independently again, requiring assistance to perform daily functions for the rest of their lives.
- Chances of death due to hip fracture top 20%.
- There are no warning signs for osteoporosis.

We really don't want to alarm any of you, but osteoporosis can be debilitating, expensive— even lethal. In fact, it is now the **twelfth leading cause of death in the U.S.** What's worse is that most people don't even think about osteoporosis until they are in their 40s or 50s, by which point *it's usually too late to do much about it.* **Osteoporosis often begins in one's 20s or 30s.**

This situation merits your attention— especially if you're a young woman. Even more so if you have these high risk factors: you have a small frame, are of Caucasian or Asian descent, have a sedentary lifestyle or eat too much processed food or not enough “healthy” food. Other contributing factors are steroid use, thyroid/parathyroid dysfunction, and having a hysterectomy.

What, exactly, is osteoporosis? To understand osteoporosis, you need to understand your bones. Your bone structure, unlike the rigid skeleton you might see in a biology room, is an active living tissue that is continuously being dissolved and rebuilt in a process commonly known as *bone resorption*. As you age, the dissolving process overtakes the rebuilding process, leading to bone loss. Osteoporosis is the “silent killer” because it occurs swiftly and can deplete as much as 40% peak bone mass before being detected.

What can you do to prevent osteoporosis? First, exercise. This is a *very* important factor for bone strength and density. And supplement with calcium. Only **2%** of the nation's female population between the ages 15 and 18 consume enough calcium to avoid osteoporosis later in life.

Calcium doesn't work alone, though; you need enough Magnesium and Vitamin

D for calcium to be able to do its job.

It's also vitally important to get the **right kind** of calcium. For instance, calcium carbonate, (in antacids like *Tums*), is *very* poorly absorbed by your body. If you take 500 mg. of calcium carbonate, your body might only be able use about 60 mg. of it. Your best bet is a combination of Microcrystalline Hydroxyapatite Calcium, Calcium Chelate and Calcium Citrate.

Additionally, periodic bone screenings can help determine if you've already suffered damage from osteoporosis, so that you might take stronger measures.

*For more information about natural remedies, phone Rick Pack, R.Ph. at: (434) 352-7161, or visit **Appomattox Drug Store**, 800 West Confederate Blvd in Appomattox.*
