

## SOME INFORMATION FOR YOU ABOUT EXERCISE

Exercise doesn't require new clothes or expensive equipment. You can walk the dog more often, park farther away from the store, find a friend to exercise with you, and increase your exercise tolerance gradually. Aerobic exercise is one that gets the heart beating faster than normal and keeps that rate for 20 minutes. Some exercises are better than others for your bones.

For example, gentle yoga, Pilates, and other exercise programs may improve bone density, flexibility, posture, balance, skeletal alignment, aerobic fitness, and muscle size. If you choose an exercise class with an instructor or personal trainer, first ask about the person's certifications and years of experience.

Although walking has many health benefits, walking alone won't prevent bone loss. The body becomes used to that activity, and eventually, walking isn't a bone growth stimulus any longer. While exercise alone probably won't increase bone to normal levels, it can improve your balance and coordination, and possibly increase your muscle strength and flexibility. Ask your physician or physical therapist for suggestions on appropriate exercises for your situation.

Performing strength/resistance/weight/ training "surprises" the bone with different exercises, weights, and machines, and leads to bone cell (osteoblast) production. A person also needs to be on his or her feet a minimum of three hours per day to stimulate bone.

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, a woman's risk of having a hip fracture equals her risk of breast, uterine, and ovarian cancer combined. Osteoporotic hip fractures cause almost as many deaths in the US as motor vehicle fatalities, due to the risks of forced bed rest, pneumonia, clots, and decreased independence.

Again, be sure to get clearance first from your physician before starting any exercise program. Ask if the exercises you want to do are suitable for you, especially if you've had hip surgery, a fracture, or chronic joint pain. Remember that exercise should be pain-free.

Some muscle aches, especially when beginning a new exercise, are fairly common. Joint pain needs to be evaluated. Numbness and tingling, or the inability to put weight on a limb, requires immediate attention.

Exercise tips – DO keep breathing throughout the exercise, to make the shoulders relax, and to ease any neck tension. Maintain normal spinal curves; use your abdominal muscles during exercise; keep the neck in alignment (you may need a small pillow to support the neck for floor exercises); use neutral wrists to hold hand weights, so that the hands and forearms are in a straight line and the wrists don't bend back.

DON'T bend forward without support, or do abdominal curls (sit-ups), or engage in high-risk sports, such as downhill skiing or horseback riding, unless your physician approves the activity first. Start slowly, with chair exercises, or whatever is easiest for you. If an exercise bothers you, STOP. Include aerobic exercises with weight-bearing for bones. After vigorous weight training, rest a day or two. "Vigorous" means it was very hard to do the last few repetitions of lifting the weights. Remember to continue taking any prescribed medications for your bones in addition to your exercises.

Soon your exercise program will become a routine that you look forward to performing!  
Some information from Exercises for Osteoporosis, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, by Dianne Daniels, MA, 2008