

THE NATUROPATHIC PERSPECTIVE

BY SHELBY WORTS, BSc, ND

Osteoporosis

Are your bones being built-up or broken-down? Actually, both should be happening all of the time... but it is the balance of these processes which is important to establish and maintain. Osteoclasts are cells that continually reabsorb bone while osteoblasts are laying down new bone.

Often we don't realize the independence that strong healthy bones afford until we damage ourselves. A broken hip is incredibly debilitating and can cut-short your golf and/or ski season... not to mention the 20% 1-year mortality rate that accompanies it. Ironically, the main density of your bones was laid down in your teenage years when good nutrition was likely the furthest thing from your mind. That said, it is not too late to care for them now. Food choices, lifestyle habits and a little education can do wonders.

Contributing factors include family history; excessive meat, caffeine and sugar intake; lack of regular physical exercise; food refining (flour, etc); lack of vitamin D from sunlight on your skin; inadequate intake of mineral-rich vegetables.

Objective data to acquire:

- baseline bone density scan; by age 40yrs
- monitor saliva and urine pH
- measure hormone levels

pH? This is a measure of the alkalinity/acidity in your body. An acidic internal environment can lead to minerals, such as calcium, being drawn from your bones and deposited into your blood & other tissues in order to neutralize the acid. The typical North American diet, based on proteins and starchy carbohydrates, is very acid-forming.

Why test hormone levels? Testosterone inhibits osteoclast activity... estrogens stimulate osteoblast activity. (*review first paragraph*)

Prevention & treatment

- consume foods rich in calcium and other alkaline-forming minerals; dark green veggies (collards, kale, spinach), sea veggies (wakame, hijiki), homemade soups from a bone, raw nuts (almonds, hazelnuts), cheese (Swiss, cheddar), canned fish with bones (sardines, salmon), whole grains
- limit animal proteins, soft drinks and refined flour products
- daily physical activity; walking, snowshoeing, weights, cardio, for at least 20minutes
- minimize intake of sugar, caffeine and tobacco
- select an overall bone-health supplement, rather than simply calcium; ie. Osteoprime by Enzymatic Therapy
- limit use of NSAIDs as they can lead to a deficiency of calcium & magnesium

A naturopathic doctor can help by:

- assessing your risk factors
- testing your hormone levels
- analyzing your hair mineral and heavy metal status
- recommending personalized diet & lifestyle modifications for optimal wellness
- assessing nutritional deficiencies specific to the medications you are taking

Be proactive with your bones. Begin taking care of them today for many adventurous and independent years to come!