

G-9 – Lim Ai Swan – The China Press Berhand - Malaysia

China Press, 19.10.2005 Health

Headings left-hand side: Can Food Therapy Help Against Hair Loss?
Can Hernia Recur?

Move it or Lose it

Strengthen your bones – bolster your health

D4 D5 D7 D9

‘Osteoporosis’ is a word we have all heard before, but just how much do you actually know about it?

You should know that if we don’t strengthen our bones while we’re young, a careless movement or a fall can very easily make our brittle bones collapse and cause fractures or, in the worst case scenario, even lead to death! According to statistics, about 30-50% of all women and 15-30% of all men develop osteoporosis leading to bone fractures at some point in their lives.

On the occasion of the world osteoporosis day on 20 October 2005, “Health” has chosen osteoporosis as a central theme, and will tell you about how you can prevent such a tragic illness. If you are still young, start strengthening your bones now. If you are at an increased risk of osteoporosis, we recommend you have a bone density test in order to establish whether you have actually developed osteoporosis and to receive treatment if necessary.

The prevention of osteoporosis is an important health issue which concerns us all. Diet, sports and other beneficial exercises help to strengthen our bones and lead us to a healthy happy life.

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Osteoporosis Day

D4

Let’s move

To you as a young person, a “bone fracture” may seem unreal and far away, but you might have heard of elderly people suffering fractures!

Let me share a true story with you:

Mrs Huang (48 years old) is a housewife. She does household chores for most of the day and does not exercise a lot. Two years ago, her period stopped coming regularly. At the time, Mrs Huang often complained about a sore waist, and no matter how much rest she took, her condition did not improve, and she felt unwell, especially after work.

Half a year later, the pain extended from her waist to her back, and also spread to her ankles, her wrists, her elbows; and the pain was so bad it woke her from her sleep. When she had her bone tissue examined, she was diagnosed with “osteoporosis”: the bone tissue of Mrs Huang was similar to that of a 75 year-old person...

Do you understand? One scary thing about osteoporosis is that it is a “silent killer” without any symptoms, and once you fall, it is too late. An even more worrying fact about osteoporosis is that the general public knows so little about the harmfulness and the dangers of this disease, and even less about the threat it poses to our lives, which is similar to that of cancer!

We often say: “Elderly people should avoid a fall, for once they fall, their bones will break”. This is a traditional saying, and everyone agrees to it. Thus, bone fractures are regarded as a “disease of the elderly”. Little do we realise that this is not correct: active exercise and a balanced diet can prevent bone fractures. Yet, sadly, the question is: how many people actually recognise the importance of healthy bones, how many people understand about the dangers of osteoporosis!?

The central theme of this year’s Osteoporosis Day, “Move it or lose it”, clearly states that the health of your bones is entirely in your own hands! According to the latest report published by Prof. Helmut Minne, chairman of the International Osteoporosis Foundation IOF, sport plays

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a crucial role in the prevention of osteoporosis: Regular exercise will keep the nightmare of developing osteoporosis at an older age at bay.

Our reporter was invited to take part in the press conference of this year's IOF meeting in Bangkok, and wrote this report for you to understand the importance of exercise for the building up and strengthening of your bones as well as the prevention of falls and resulting fractures, and to speed up the recovery process.

Caption: Research has shown that Tai Chi exercises are beneficial to improving our balance and strengthen our muscles, thus reducing the risk of falls.



Health
Motto:

We only learn to value youth and health after we have lost them.

There is something we can do to prevent osteoporosis, and that is movement. The aim of exercise is mainly to improve our bone structure, and to reduce the loss of bone tissue, and it helps to increase our bone density. Furthermore, it can also improve the bone quality as well as our sense of coordination and balance, thus reducing the frequency of falls...

On the occasion of the World Osteoporosis Day on 20 October, let us talk a bit more about bones, a very important factor in the life of the elderly!

Don't let our bones become brittle

Caption: Active exercise or losing bone tissue, it's up to you.

Sport increases bone density

Why does sport play such an important role in reducing the risk of falls? The stress of sport, also named "load sport", such as: jumping, running, dancing, walking can increase the bone density and quality in young people. This reduces the threat of a loss of bone tissue later in life. Furthermore, this load sport can help adults to safeguard their bone density. As post-menopausal women are at a high risk of losing bone tissue, sport is especially important for them.

Prof. Helmut Minne says that sport can strengthen our muscles, improve our balance and thus prevent falls. Falls are the most common causes for bone fractures, therefore, the prevention of falls is especially important for the elderly. Furthermore, sport is also an important factor in the rehabilitation process after a bone fracture, as it influences the quality and strength of the bone.

How do we exercise in order to prevent falls then?

Various research has shown that people with correct posture, good balance and greater muscular power have a lower risk of falls, whereas people with a more sedentary lifestyle, who sit down for a long time every day, have a higher risk of hip fractures. "Women who sit for more than nine hours a day are 50% more likely to have a hip fracture than those who sit for less than six hours a day."

It is worth mentioning that traditional Chinese Tai Chi is one of the best sport for preventing osteoporosis. Research has shown that people practising Tai Chi are 50% less likely to suffer a fall than others, and only 15 weeks of Tai Chi training shows significant results.

By exercising during our youth, we can strengthen our bones and exercising as adults is beneficial to safeguarding the condition of our bones. Thus, irrespective of age, regular load sport will help increase the bone density, and especially those people who do not practise sport regularly, no matter if old or young, should start exercising immediately to prevent the danger of bone fractures later in life. No matter if old or young, let's start to move right now!

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Osteoporosis Day

Osteoporosis

According to professor Helmut Minne, exercise can help prevent osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a silent killer, we usually do not feel it coming, and even if there are symptoms, they are not very obvious. Patients often only realise they are suffering from osteoporosis after the bone deformity has become apparent (e.g. a person growing smaller or developing a hunchback), or even after bones have been fractured, and at this point, the loss of bone structure has already reached a critical point.

According figures published by the International Osteoporosis Foundation IOF, about 1.6 million hip fractures occur worldwide each year as a consequence of osteoporosis. Try to imagine this: every year, 1.6 million people are faced with this dramatic turn in their lives. I still recall that on the day I presided this press conference, a person suffering from a hip fracture said a very stirring thing: “Someone who has never experienced it may not understand how painful a bone fracture is, the pain exceeds anything a human being can tolerate.”

It is estimated that by 2050, between 4.5 million and 6.3 million people will be suffering from hip fractures as a consequence of osteoporosis, and in women over 45, osteoporosis accounts for more days spent in hospital than many other diseases. Yet, many people do not know that there is an easy and most effective way of preventing osteoporosis: healthy and regular exercise can help us evade this nightmare.

According to Prof. Helmut Minne, National Chairman of the IOF, in girls the bone tissue accumulated during the ages of 11-13 roughly equals the amount of bone lost during the 30 years following menopause. The number of people in Asia who suffer from fractures as a result of osteoporosis is rapidly increasing. Asian women have a rather small build, and very small, thin people easily develop osteoporosis and suffer from related bone fractures. Thus, it is vital to make people aware of the importance of exercise.

Illustration: Normal bone tissue (above), in comparison with brittle bone tissue (below)
Ilium bone
Hip Joint
Coccyx
Femur

Every year, approximately 1.6 million hip fractures occur as a result of osteoporosis

What does osteoporosis mean?

Osteoporosis is an illness that reduces the density of bones, leading to an increased risk of fracture. Worldwide, it is the most common disease that weakens people. Once developed, it is a very painful disease, patients lose the ability to move, can no longer provide for themselves and in most cases, the disease eventually leads to death. It is called a “silent killer”, and befalls mostly post-menopausal women and elderly people, it is a form of degeneration of the human body.

The causes for osteoporosis are as follows: inherited genetic defects, unbalanced diet, abnormal secretion of sex hormones, smoking, alcohol, chronic diseases, disorder of sebaceous hormones as well as diseases of the (para)thyroid glands, etc.

Health
Motto

Drink tea to prevent tooth decay

Picture caption: Balance exercises can help lessen the risk of falls.

Lessen the risk of falls to prevent bone fractures

A fracture caused by a fall often leads to the discovery of osteoporosis in elderly people: Every day, about 30% of all persons aged 65 and above suffer a fall. As we all know, a fall affects less the muscles and nerves, but poses a danger to the bones.

In women who have developed osteoporosis just after their menopause, a tight regular exercise regimen can effectively reduce the loss of bone tissue as well as the frequency of backaches, and lower the cholesterol level.

Back strengthening exercises aimed at reducing the risk of vertebral and spine fractures are closely linked to rehabilitation from vertebral fractures. They even help elderly people with a weak constitution and who live in a home for the elderly, to increase their physical strength and stamina. A three-month exercise programme aimed at increasing stamina and functionality can help patients with hip fractures increase their bodily strength during the rehabilitation process.

A balanced diet, less alcohol, no smoking

Prevention is always better than treatment, and there are a few things we can actively do to prevent osteoporosis. A healthy lifestyle, a balanced diet, sufficient calcium and vitamin D intake can prevent osteoporosis. Furthermore, we should also refrain from smoking and avoid large quantities of alcohol.

If osteoporosis is diagnosed and treated at an early stage, about half of all femur and vertebral fractures can thus be avoided. The treatment of osteoporosis includes the administration of calcium and vitamin D supplements. Non-hormonal bisphosphonate medicines help maintain the density of the bone tissue and reduce the frequency of fractures.

Selective oestrogen receptor modulators are a medicine that reacts with the oestrogen in the bones, thus helping to maintain the density of the bone tissue and reduce the frequency of fractures. Hormone replacement therapy HRT is used to replenish oestrogen levels in post-menopausal women. The treatment helps to maintain the density of the bone tissue and reduce the frequency of fractures.

Illustration: Plenty of healthy exercise helps prevent bone fractures.

Illustration: Bone density test: helps us learn more about the condition of our bones.

China Press 19-10-05 Health Warning

D7 (continued from D7)

We must invest in our bones as early as possible

The bone development both in men and women reaches its peak between the ages of 11 and 17, and it is very important we support this development by regular exercise and a balanced diet. Did you know that treating your body well while you are young is indeed an “investment in your bones”, which reduces the risk of bone fractures during a later stage in life?

Bones are made of living tissue and the bone metabolism adapts changes in our body throughout our lives. As with other organs, the safeguarding of our bones requires a balanced diet, including wholesome nutrients (calories, protein, fats, carbohydrates) and micro-nutrients (vitamins and mineral substances) in order to achieve a healthy development.

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A balanced diet and lifestyle help to build up and save bone substance that strengthens our bones and reduces the risk of bone fractures in elderly people. We must start investing in our bones as early as possible, ideally before the age of 20, as bone density reaches its peak around this age.

Calcium is the most important part of our bones, and it is also the most important factor in bone health throughout our lives. Research has shown that children and adolescents who take in a sufficient amount of calcium or foods rich in calcium every day will show an increase in bone density of 5-10%. Furthermore, it is suggested that a 10% increase in bone density can effectively reduce the risk of fractures in elderly people by 50%.

With regard to post-menopausal women, research suggests that the intake of calcium supplements can lessen the brittleness of bones and reduce the risk of fractures. Vitamin D, which can be 'produced' by exposure to sunrays, facilitates the absorption of calcium.

Picture caption: A balanced diet can help to prevent osteoporosis.

The importance of Calcium and Vitamin D

Our bone density is usually determined by inherited genes. Yet, if we do not take in enough calcium at the crucial time, we will not achieve a high bone density. Therefore, the older we get, the more calcium we should take in, this especially applies to people aged 65 and above. Usually, elderly people go outside less frequently, and in combination with an unbalanced diet, this leads to the body lacking both sunshine and calcium, thus increasing the brittleness of the bones and the risk of bone fractures. Therefore, it is generally suggested that elderly people should do regular 'load sports' (such as go for walks) and expose their skin to the sun in order to acquire vitamin D.

According to the World Health Organisation WHO, we need a different amount of calcium intake at different stages in our lives: children (500-700mg per day), 10-18 year-olds (1300mg per day), 19-65 year-olds (1000mg per day). Post-menopausal women as well as persons aged 65 and above should take in about 1300mg of calcium every day.

Sunrays stimulate vitamin D production on the skin. Children should expose their hands, their face and their legs to the sun about 2-3 times per week, 5-15 minutes at a time. Foods rich in vitamin D are salmon and whole grain rice, etc.

Picture caption: Drinking milk rich in calcium is one of the methods that help to prevent osteoporosis.

A simple one-minute test

Your doctor can check the condition of your bones through a Bone Mineral Density test. This test measures the density of the vertebrae, the wrists or the femur (these are areas that often suffer fractures as a result of osteoporosis). Other methods include testing the bone density of the ankle or the bones of the hand. These tests are not painful, not invasive and very safe.

Many people do not know that a bone density test at an early stage can help to prevent osteoporosis, and it tells if our bone density is too low before we actually suffer a bone fracture. This can help us predict the possibility of a fracture and determine the loss rate of bone substance (this test needs to be performed once every year).

The "One-minute-test Osteoporosis Risk Test" designed by the International Osteoporosis Foundation IOF allows you to check if you are at risk of developing osteoporosis. If you answer any of the following questions with 'yes', you might have an osteoporosis risk. You should consult your doctor for further examination and advice.

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Question	Yes	No
1) Have either of your parents broken a hip after a minor bump or fall?		
2) Have you broken a bone after a minor bump or fall?		
3) Have you taken corticosteroid tablets (cortisone, prednisone, etc) for more than 3 months?		
4) Have you lost more than 3 cm in height?		
5) Do you regularly drink heavily (in excess of safe drinking limits)?		
6) Do you smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day?		
7) Do you suffer frequently from diarrhoea (caused by problems such as celiac disease or Crohn's disease)?		
8) For women: Did you undergo menopause before the age of 45?		
9) Have your periods stopped for 12 months or more (other than because of pregnancy or menopause)?		
10) For men: Have you ever suffered from impotence, lack of libido or other symptoms related to low testosterone levels?		

Please note that if you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, it does not mean that you have osteoporosis. Diagnosis of osteoporosis can only be made by a physician through a bone density test. We recommend that you show this test to your doctor, who will advise whether further tests are necessary. The good news is that osteoporosis can be diagnosed easily and treated.



If the sun doesn't shine, the doctor will be on your doorstep soon.