

Step by step towards strong bones

IOF, which conducts studies all around the world, in order to spread Osteoporosis awareness, has named the motto for 2005 as “Exercising” – “Move it or Lose it”. During the activities, the emphasis is on the importance of moving for keeping a peak quality and strength of bone mass.

International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) pointed out on the importance of physical activities in helping to prevent osteoporosis, which causes economical and sociological destruction and nominated 2005 as “physical activity” year. Researches done in this field have shown that exercise done with weights helps to increase bone and muscle mass. Exercising helps in stimulating the building of bone mass as well as in the absorption of calcium. Exercising after the age of 65 decreases the risk of falling. Physical activity is very effective for increasing the prospect of teaching a balance and correcting the posture. In order to keep healthy bones, we should give importance on eating always food rich in calcium and vitamin D and also exercising during our lifetime.

Osteoporosis is a disease of the bone metabolism, which during our lifetime cause loss of bone mass and consequently brittleness. Insufficiency of bone quality happens by aging. As we get older, even if we may still have the same bone mineral density, the risk of brittleness of bones is much higher. With longer life expectancy and the world population being much older than before, osteoporosis risk is becoming as the most important health risk among individuals.

Epidemiological researches done all over the world have proven that Osteoporosis has affected 75 million people in Europe, United States and Japan.

Fractured hips increase the rate of mortality

Despite not being the most common fractures due to osteoporosis, “fractured hip” is the most important osteoporosis fracture, as it is extremely life threatening. In Europe alone, during 2000, in Europe, 0,89 million out of 3,79 million people who had various fractures due to Osteoporosis, had a broken hip. A woman reaching the age of 50, has a 2,8% chance of dying from a broken hip. This is an identical risk factor to dying from breast cancer risk. This is also four times a risk than death due to endometrial cancer. Every year there are 1,6 million people dying from broken hip around the world. In 2050, this figure is expected to reach between 4,5 million and 6,3 million. The mortality rate following the first year after breaking a hip is between 20 to 24%. The mortality risk remains the same the following five years.

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Men also have the same risk

Osteoporosis, which in the past was supposed to affect only women, is known to affect men as well. One in every three women over the age of 50 has a possibility to have a fracture due to osteoporosis, while this proportion is one in every 5 men risking the same. This rate is almost the same as the cancer of the prostate, which is the most common disease men are supposed to encounter during their lifetime. Even though the rate of broken hips among women prevail men, the mortality from broken hip is higher among men.

It is time to take precautions

Every 30 seconds due to osteoporosis, a body part is broken. This only demonstrates the importance of osteoporosis in the public health. During 2000, in United States, researches done to determine the cost of osteoporosis have shown that it was 31,7 million Euros for direct cost of osteoporosis. If the expected demographical changes will occur, this figure will reach in 2050, to 76,7 million Euros. In United States the cost for treating the Osteoporosis and its consequences amounts to 15 Billion US Dollars per year. In the UK, this figure is approximately 750 million GBP per year. In Turkey, based on statistics, which are not too sure, this figures are between 5 to 50 billion Turkish Liras per patient (not including hip prosthesis, where the cost is much higher). Today we know that osteoporosis affects many people in the world, however very few are diagnosed right and treated accordingly.

A study done by International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) in 11 countries (Austria, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, Spain and in the UK), has shown a sad truth, which is despite many researches and trainings in the field of Osteoporosis in recent years, it is still impossible to determine bone loss and consequently to prevent fractures. In countries where these researches were done, while the awareness of osteoporosis increased, one third of post-menopausal women confessed that they would have never thought that one day they might be affected by this disease. This clearly shows that it should be a more intensive research for Osteoporosis.

In each country, the fight against osteoporosis is generally directed by scientific institutions and health societies. Only one Foundation in the whole world gathers all the institutions and societies together. The aim of IOF, which has 179 national members in 89 countries, is to spread osteoporosis awareness in all the countries in the world. Through various Societies all around the world, IOF is trying to create awareness among communities and also is supporting projects aiming to make changes on osteoporosis in the politics of certain governments. The CEO of IOF , Mr. Daniel Navid, was in our country last week to talk about the facts, treatment and prevention of

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osteoporosis in Turkey. Mr Navid first participated to the press conference organized by the Turkish Osteoporosis Society and Osteoporosis Patients Society and sponsored by Sanofi-Aventis.

Later on, during the meetings with the societies, he explained a way that Turkey should follow in the struggle against osteoporosis.

To activate National Forces

Dr Navid spoke about the creation of a strategy in all the countries where IOF is active, by gathering various osteoporosis institutions together, the same as it is done in Turkey. He also added the following: “We are trying to create awareness by forming a pressure group in the European Parliament. This will create a pressure on the European Union and generally on the system. We are trying to apply the same in India as well. In fact by keeping informed one another from the bottom to the top, we are helping to increase the pressure on the awareness” Dr. Navid’s aim is to gather all the institutions and societies in all the countries. He carried on by saying: “Any material obtained or produced on an international basis means nothing. The most important thing is to strengthen the potential within the countries. Therefore, we are organizing targeted support activities in various countries. Thus, we are supporting their target, which is determined beforehand. We are presenting them internationally and helping them financially. We are coordinating in order to allow them to operate more efficiently, and help people to be more active. We are organizing workshops and meetings for these purposes. In fact we like very much to work in Brazil and India. These countries offer much more advantages potentially. We believe that there is a lot to do in these countries. Turkey is also one of these countries where we are intending to work more extensively”.

What are the risk factors:

The Chairman of the Patient Society in Turkey, Prof Dr Gulseren Akyuz who spoke during the press conference explained the risk factors of osteoporosis, as the following: “First, we have to find the reason why we do not achieve peak bone mass during childhood. This can be due to genetic, hormonal, environmental factors or to wrong nutrition. Not being able to synthesizing vitamin D, having fair skin, being thin or petite and finally having osteoporosis in the family play an important role among genetic factors,. For women, to have early menopause, not to menstruate for a long time, not to have children or have breastfeeding for a long time, are risk factors. Furthermore, osteoporosis is common among women who had a low oestrogen level when they were young. Nutrition plays an important role in the development of osteoporosis. Nutrition, which is low in calcium, smoking, alcohol, too much coffee and coke increase the risk of osteoporosis. Furthermore, not to stay

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enough in sunlight, not to have enough physical activities, being immobile, to stay in bed for long period of time after a fracture or any other sickness or lack of physical movement, are among high risk factors.

The use of epileptic medicines containing Cortisone, also increase the risk of osteoporosis.

How to diagnose osteoporosis?

It is possible to determine if you are under risk by getting a “one minute risk test” either from the internet or by any other institution. This can alarm you to go and seek medical advice. The x-ray mineral measurement of the bones (DXA or SXA) or some other biochemical examination, help determine osteoporosis. With the help of bone measurement device it is easy to determine the level of calcium of a bone.

Photograph: During the press conference where Dr. Navid was the guest speaker, a symbolic walk and yoga were organized to show the importance of physical activity.