

# Physiotherapy can aid in osteoporosis prevention

"Sticks and stones" can break your bones if you are one of the 1.4 million Canadians who have been diagnosed with osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis literally means "porous" bones and is characterized by the deterioration of bone tissue.

One in four women over the age of 50 will be diagnosed with this disease, but contrary to popular belief men are also at risk. In fact, one in eight men will also be affected and should ask their physician about having their bone mineral density tested.

People with osteoporosis have decreased bone strength which puts them at a higher risk for fractures. Common areas of fracture are the wrists, hips and spine. A person with decreased bone density can cause a compression fracture in their spine simply by walking.

There are many different medications available now to help treat osteoporosis and along with physiotherapy and weight bearing exercise people can actually increase their bone mass.

What will a physiotherapist do for you?

A physiotherapist will educate you on the importance of weight bearing and strengthening exercises to assist in the "bone building" process. The exercises should be tailored to suit your needs and interests and should

easily fit into your daily routine.

Strengthening exercises will target muscles around the wrists, hips and spine. Contracting a muscle will in turn cause a pull on the tendon, which is attached to the bone. This pull will stimulate bone growth.

Weight bearing exercises include activities such as walking, running, aerobics or tai chi. Activities such as swimming and biking are great for overall fitness but not the best choices for building bone.

If you have been diagnosed with osteoporosis or osteopenia (low bone mass but not yet osteoporosis) a trip to the physiotherapist is definitely worth your while. The exercises given can be done at home with one or two follow up visits to make sure they are being done correctly and that progress is being made. It has been proven that exercise along with the proper medication can increase bone mass and prevent life threatening fractures.

For more information on physiotherapy and osteoporosis you can attend a free one hour seminar being offered at Generations Physiotherapy Centre. Please call for additional information.

Submitted by Jenni Veneruz,  
Registered Physiotherapist  
Generations Physiotherapy Centre  
info@generationsphysio.com

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