

## OSTEOPOROSIS

### HOW CAN I FIND OUT THE STRENGTH OF MY BONES?

The most accurate way of assessing the strength of your bones is by having a dual energy X-ray absorptiometry - often called a DEXA scan. The machine is used to scan the hips and the lower spine, the areas where osteoporosis is most likely to occur as we age.

The result of the scan compares the state of your bones to the average range of a young, normal person of the same sex. A chart of your bone health can then be prepared. The scan results must then be read by a specialist who has been clinically trained to interpret the readings, taking your full medical history into account. This result is sent to your Doctor who can then discuss the appropriate options with you.

At the Portland Hospital they provide bone density scans on a Lunar Prodigy Densitometer that offers very low exposure rates and provides a comprehensive analysis of spine and hip bone mineral densities.

In accordance with current Osteoporosis Society and World Health Organisation guidelines, they routinely perform lumbar spine and both hip imaging to assess all patients.

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### REDUCING YOUR RISK

There are many factors involved in the development of osteoporosis. However, it is not all gloom and doom, as there are certain changes you can make to your lifestyle that can appreciably reduce your risk to the disease.

The younger you start the more you reduce your risk.

Firstly, be sure to eat plenty of foods that are high in calcium and vitamin D. Good sources of easily absorbable calcium include broccoli, chestnuts, most dark green leafy vegetables, hazelnuts, kale, kelp, molasses, oats, oysters, salmon, sardines (with the bones), sesame seeds, shrimps, soybeans, tofu, turnip greens and wheat germ.

Consume whole grains and calcium foods at different times. Whole grains contain a substance that binds with calcium at bedtime, when it is best absorbed and also aids in sleeping.

If you are a menopausal or post-menopausal woman with osteoporosis, include plenty of soy products in your diet; soy is rich in phyto-oestrogens, which may, to some extent, substitute for your body's own oestrogen if it is manufacturing too little. The latter effect is very important as it is at this time that the body stops maintaining its own oestrogen levels and so needs a helping hand from the diet.

Secondly research has shown that women who smoke or who drink alcohol to excess may also be at risk. Maybe this is another reason to cut down or give up altogether.

# THE PHYSIOSTUDIO

Finally the value of exercise in the time around the menopause cannot be stressed too highly. By and large the weight you carry through the menopause will stay with you for life. If you think it is hard to lose weight before the menopause then it will be much harder afterwards. Joining a gym and taking regular exercise to improve your cardio vascular function and muscle strength will also help to strengthen the bones and reduce your osteoporosis risk.

*This information brought to you by the Physio Studio, Binfield Bracknell's premier physiotherapy practice.*

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