

COPING

OCTOBER 12, 2007

Physical Activity! Last issue we talked about weight bearing, strength training, aerobic and balance exercise and posture training. Have you been making good progress? September is the start of the long and sometimes dreary Canadian winter, which makes it even more important to get into a good habit of regular physical activity.

Do something you enjoy so you will be glad to be active.

Get an exercise buddy. It may be a good friend or just a chart you put on the refrigerator door where you can record your successes. Why not buy a set of stickers and reward yourself, just like your teachers used to do in school. It can be fun.

Remember, it is important to consult with a doctor or physical therapist before commencing or adjusting any exercise program!

Thinking of joining a fitness program?

One option for regular fitness routine is to join a public fitness program. These programs can vary in training and safety. Use the following guide to help you compare programs.

Before joining a fitness club ask these questions:

- ~ Are the instructors certified by a municipal, provincial or nationally recognized authority?
- ~ Is the type of floor surface friendly to your body (i.e., carpet with underlay vs. concrete)?
- ~ Is the facility clean and cool with tidy well-ventilated exercise rooms? Unnecessary items should not be left on the floor.
- ~ Is there a good variety of equipment that is well maintained?
- ~ Are certified instructors available to teach you how to use the equipment properly to prevent injury?
- ~ What is the reputation of the club? How long has the club been in business? Speak with members, competitor clubs and consumer associations.
- ~ What is the club's legal responsibility to its members?
- ~ What is the injury rate at the club?
- ~ What are the training and upgrading requirements for instructors?
- ~ What is the class size? Can the instructor watch everyone?

- ~ How do the instructors relate to the participants?
- ~ Do instructors want to help you gradually improve and reach realistic goals?
- ~ Are the club's fees and methods of payment agreeable to you, without a strong sales pitch?
- ~ Does the physical layout of the building include separate changing facilities for men and women? If the club has a spa/sauna/Jacuzzi, is there a separate entrance? Are towels and lockers provided? Are there day or time restrictions?
- ~ Is the club close to your home so you will use it on a regular basis?

Before joining a fitness class check:

- ~ If the instructor paces the class appropriately for participants
- ~ If the instructor encourages you to go at your own speed and compete only with yourself
- ~ If the instructor is concerned about the people in the class
- ~ If the instructor answers questions satisfactorily
- ~ If the program has a warm-up and cool-down phase.
- ~ If it is okay to bring a friend along (if possible)

This information was taken from *'The Osteoporosis Book, 2nd Edition, Prevention and Treatment for Men and Women'* by Gwen Ellert, RN, Med, and John Wade, MD available through Osteoporosis Canada.

Osteoporosis Canada has some good resources to help you. Check the OC website at www.osteoporosis.ca, go to the tab for Programs and Resources, and then follow the link to Publications. You can also phone 1-800-463-6842.

Funny Bone:

One caveman to another: "Show off! Go ahead, stand up straight – but you'll spend the rest of your life having backaches."

COPING will come to you every second Friday. We hope you enjoy it and find the information useful.

"The material contained in this newsletter is provided for general information only. It should not be relied on to suggest a course of treatment for a particular individual or as a substitute for consultation with qualified health professionals who are familiar with your individual medical needs. Should you have any health care related questions or concerns, you should contact your physician. You should

never disregard medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this or any newsletter."

COPN NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 26, 2007

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

Vitamin D: Is this just a fad?

Vitamin D plays a key role in helping calcium absorption from food. For many years, it was thought that this was the only reason to take vitamin D. We now know better.

Vitamin D from the sun

Vitamin D is the "sunshine vitamin". The natural way to make vitamin D is through exposure to sunlight. When our skin is exposed to UV B rays, it produces vitamin D.

However, several factors limit the amount of vitamin D that your skin can produce:

- As you get older, your skin production of vitamin D decreases.
- We do not get enough sunshine in Canada. In fact, between the months of November through to May, our skin cannot make any vitamin D, even when we are exposed to sunlight. This is because sunlight in winter months contains only UV A rays, but none of the UV B rays that are important for vitamin D production.
- Wearing sunblock or covering up with clothes essentially prevents vitamin D production.

Vitamin D from foods

There is surprisingly very little vitamin D in foods. In fact, in Canada, we have to fortify certain foods with vitamin D to help prevent rickets in children (rickets occurs when there is significant vitamin D deficiency).

Fortified foods include milk, soya milk, some orange juices, margarine and some yogurts. A few other foods contain small amounts of vitamin D (salmon, sardines, liver, egg yolk). Even if you consume large quantities of these food sources, as an adult, you still cannot get sufficient amounts of vitamin D.

Do you need a vitamin D supplement?

Most likely Yes.

Most Canadians will have low vitamin D levels in their blood at least during some time during the year. This is because we have poor exposure to sunlight and there is very little vitamin D in our foods.

If you are 19-50 years old, Osteoporosis Canada recommends that you take vitamin D 400 IU daily.

If you are over 50 years old, Osteoporosis Canada recommends that you take at least 800 IU of vitamin D daily.

Why should you take a vitamin D supplement?

- Vitamin D is very beneficial to your bones. It helps reduce your risk of osteoporosis and also decreases your risk of suffering a fracture (broken bone).
- Vitamin D in doses of 800 IUs a day or greater has also been proven to decrease falls. This is because vitamin D helps your muscles to function properly.
- There is a growing body of evidence that vitamin D may reduce the risk of certain cancers such as bowel cancer and breast cancer. The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that Canadian adults consider taking a vitamin D supplement.
- Vitamin D deficiency is currently being investigated for possible links with certain other diseases, including:
 - Prostate cancer
 - Ovarian cancer
 - Multiple sclerosis
 - Juvenile onset diabetes
 - Rheumatoid arthritis
 - High blood pressure
 - Heart disease and heart failure

What Vitamin D supplements should I take?

The best form of vitamin D is vitamin D3. Vitamin D3 comes in tablets that contain 400 IUs or 1000 IUs.

You can also find vitamin D3 in multivitamins (usually they contain 400 IUs). Some calcium supplements contain small amounts of vitamin D (usually not in large enough quantities to give you sufficient vitamin D for the day).

Halibut liver oil and cod liver oil capsules contain vitamin D3. However, they also contain vitamin A that may not be so good for bone health in large quantities. Therefore, these fish liver oil capsules are not the best way for you to get your vitamin D.

Your doctor may prescribe a vitamin D tablet with higher amounts of vitamin D. One such supplement is D-tabs® which contains 10,000 IUs of vitamin D3 per tablet. It is usually taken only once a week.

Although it is usually recommended that adults less than 50 years old take 400 IUs of vitamin D daily and that adults over age 50 take 1000 IUs daily, different people may have different needs for vitamin D. Your doctor may do a vitamin D blood test to make sure that you are getting just the right amount for you.

Vitamin D: Is this just a fad?

Not at all! Vitamin D is here to stay. Taking vitamin D supplements will help you stay healthy and will decrease your risk of developing:

- Osteoporosis
- Fractures (broken bones)
- Falls

Vitamin D may also help decrease your risk of certain forms of cancer.

Still not sure about vitamin D? Talk to your doctor. Get the facts.

Prepared by Dr. Diane Theriault, MD, FRCPC

For more information about vitamin D check the Osteoporosis Canada web site at www.osteoporosis.ca

Funny Bone: A 6 year old was asked where his grandma lived. "Oh," he said, "She lives at the airport, and when we want her we just go get her. Then when we're done having her visit, we take her back to the airport."

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

It is important for you to eat a **healthy diet**, get some appropriate **exercise**, take your **calcium and vitamin D** and if your doctor has prescribed a **medication** don't forget to take it as directed.

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