



Osteoporosis Canada

Ostéoporose Canada



COPING

'A newsletter from COPN'

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Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

Bone Appétit: New Information on Calcium & Vitamin D

During the November 17, 2010 virtual education forum on nutrition and osteoporosis a number of questions were asked of the two presenters Anna Pohorecky and Wendy Borody and although many were answered during the forum time ran out before the experts were able to answer all. In this COPING newsletter we will be providing the answers to those questions.

Please note that the virtual education forum is still available for viewing on www.osteoporosis.ca. Click on "COPN Patient Network" on the left hand side, and then click on "Virtual Forum" for more information. If you have any questions, please email cPatientNetwork@osteoporosis.ca or call 1-800-463-6842 ext. 224.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS – Part 3

12. Does too much cheese cause kidney stones? If so, what would be the appropriate amount to take on a daily basis?

Answer: The main cause of kidney stones is not drinking enough water throughout the day. There have been no studies showing that dairy products or cheese increase the risk of kidney stones in normal individuals. But there have been some studies that show that women who take large amounts of calcium supplements are at slightly increased risk for kidney stones.

Canada's Food Guide recommends 2 Milk and Alternatives servings a day for adults under 50 and 3 servings a day for those over 50. The recommendations are the same for men and women.

Most cheeses tend to have high fat content, so you may wish to check the nutrition food labels to find less fatty cheeses. Also, discuss how much would be best for you with your physician.

13. 800 to 2000 IU of vitamin D is a large range. I have osteopenia and I am 60 years old. Should I be taking closer to the upper limit of vitamin D?

Answer: “Osteopenia” is an old medical term that has been replaced by the term ‘low bone density’. Some people with low bone density do not need any osteoporosis medication whereas others with low bone density are at high risk for fractures and should be started on medication. Osteoporosis Canada recommends that bone density results be used as part of a comprehensive fracture risk assessment that includes a look at other risk factors such as your sex, your age, other medications, whether you have had a previous osteoporotic fracture, etc. You should discuss your bone density results with your physician to find out what your own personal fracture risk is.

The new Osteoporosis Canada Guidelines are very clear. Everyone over the age of 50 should be taking a vitamin D supplement of 800 to 2000 IU a day, irrespective of their bone density results. Why that range?

- 800 IU a day is the lowest dose that can help decrease your chance of breaking a bone
- 2000 IU is the upper limit for safety.

Having a range allows you the flexibility to pick from a variety of vitamin D supplements. If you are at high risk of fracture and require a prescription medication for osteoporosis, your physician should check the level of vitamin D in your blood to see if the amount you are taking is adequate.

14. Why does canned salmon, excluding the bones, have no calcium while fresh and frozen salmon does? Or have I misunderstood?

Answer: You have misunderstood. The only source of calcium in canned salmon is the calcium that is contained in the bones themselves. Canning softens the bones making them easy to consume. Similarly, eating the bones in canned sardines is also a good source of calcium. There is no significant amount of calcium from fresh or frozen salmon as those bones are too hard to eat.

15. I have read that calcium from milk cannot be absorbed by our bodies. How do we know for sure that milk is a good source of calcium?

Answer: Research shows that milk is a good source of calcium that is well absorbed by the body. Based on that research Health Canada has identified milk products as one of the best and richest sources of calcium for human consumption.

16. Fosavance® has 2800 IU of Vitamin D. Is this enough vitamin D for a week?

Answer: Fosavance® 2800 contains 2800 IU of vitamin D, taken once a week, and therefore is equivalent to 400 IU of vitamin D per day. If you are over age 50, that would be insufficient vitamin D as Osteoporosis Canada recommends 800 to 2000 IU per day for that age group. There is also Fosavance® 5600 which contains 5600 IU of vitamin D, taken once a week, which is equivalent to 800 IU per day. Be sure to discuss with your health care provider which product may be best for you.

17. Are vitamin D drops as beneficial as tablets?

Answer: Yes, they are. Depending on the dosage, they are equally as good. Take whichever form of vitamin D works best for you.

18. I am 61 years old – how can I avoid further loss in my bone density?

Answer: Bone density loss occurs in everyone after age 50 (indeed, in most of us, it starts even prior to that age). Attention to lifestyle may help slow down that loss a bit but it cannot prevent it altogether. Pay attention to your osteoporosis lifestyle risk factors. Make sure you're getting enough calcium, review Canada's Food Guide, use the Calculate My Calcium tool from the Osteoporosis Canada website (www.osteoporosis.ca), participate in weight bearing activity that is safe for you to do as well as exercises that improve balance such as Tai Chi. Some other tips include no smoking, and limiting the sodium, caffeine and alcohol in your diet. Depending on your bone density and your other risk factors, you may be required to take medication to reduce your risk of fracture. See your health care provider to discuss this further.

19. Is it harmful to avoid calcium?

Answer: Yes!!! Bones require a supply of calcium throughout a person's lifespan. Adults under 50 need 1000 mg of elemental calcium per day while adults 50 or over need 1200 mg of elemental calcium per day. For general health, an age appropriate intake of calcium is recommended, preferably from your diet, unless your medical condition or your health provider says otherwise.

20. How can we obtain a copy of the 2010 Osteoporosis Guidelines?

Answer: The information on the Guidelines can be found on the Osteoporosis Canada website (www.osteoporosis.ca). The Guidelines are intended for health care professionals. The Canadian Osteoporosis Patient Network published some articles summarizing the Guidelines for the general public. To access these, go to the Osteoporosis Canada website, click on COPN Patient Network on the left hand column, then click on COPING archives on the left. Several issues of COPING were devoted to the Guidelines including all of the COPING issues published between October 15 and Dec 23, 2010, inclusive. You may also phone Osteoporosis Canada's toll free line at 1-800-463-6842 to speak with a trained volunteer.

Funny Bone – Sign on the outskirts of a small town: Welcome speeders. We're policed to meet you!

Notices/references

i. Remember: It is important for you to eat a calcium rich diet (take calcium supplements, if necessary), get some appropriate exercise, take your vitamin D and if your doctor has prescribed a medication don't forget to take it as directed.

ii. COPING Weekly will come to you every second Friday. We hope you enjoy it and find the information useful. Remember to log on to www.osteoporosis.ca for up-to-date information.

iii. 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 healthcare-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.

iv. To have your name removed from the COPN mailing list please contact us at the email below.

You must provide the first and last name for which you registered in order to be removed from this list.

<PatientNetwork@osteoporosis.ca>

This issue of COPING is sponsored by Gay Lea

