10 Tips...

**Strong Women, Strong Bones**

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1. Women build bone in a “bone bank” from ages 10 to 30. After age 30, women either maintain what they’ve saved or withdraw from their “bone bank.”

2. Many factors contribute to keeping bone in the bone bank. Deposits include a nutritious diet, weight-bearing exercise, and adequate calcium and Vitamin D. Lifestyle habits that can cause withdrawals are smoking, excessive alcohol, a sedentary lifestyle and being postmenopausal.

3. Bone health after menopause is especially important since bone density can be affected by decreased estrogen levels. 50% of postmenopausal women can rapidly lose bone mass.

4. Osteoporosis progresses without symptoms. One in two women over age 50 is at risk for fracture and postmenopausal women are at greatest risk due to the decline in estrogen.

5. About 700,000 osteoporotic spinal fractures occur each year, yet only 1/3 are diagnosed.

6. Over half of osteoporotic fractures occur at sites outside the spine and most are also not diagnosed.

7. To prevent osteoporosis, start by taking 1,200-1,500 mg of calcium a day in divided doses with no more than 500 mg per dose. Try a calcium supplement or calcium-rich foods, including low-fat dairy products or green, leafy vegetables such as broccoli, kale and spinach greens.

8. A diet rich in Vitamin D aids in the absorption of calcium and stimulates bone formation. Consume 400-800 IU of Vitamin D each day.

9. African-American women usually are at less risk for osteoporosis than Caucasian and Asian women. However, as African-American women mature, their risk of developing osteoporosis almost approaches the risk for Caucasian women.

10. Exercise is vital! Exercises that help maintain bone mass make the muscles work against gravity. Try walking, dancing and tennis. While cycling and swimming are effective cardiovascular activities, they are not weight-bearing.

11. Get tested. Talk to your doctor about scheduling a DXA scan to determine your T-score. If your T-score indicates you have osteoporosis, talk to your doctor about the multiple prescription medications designed to treat osteoporosis.

12. Without diagnosis, the first sign of osteoporosis may be a fracture. Spinal fractures are often confused with back pain and left untreated. Multiple spinal fractures can result in back pain, loss of height, or a curved, stooped posture often called “dowager’s hump.”