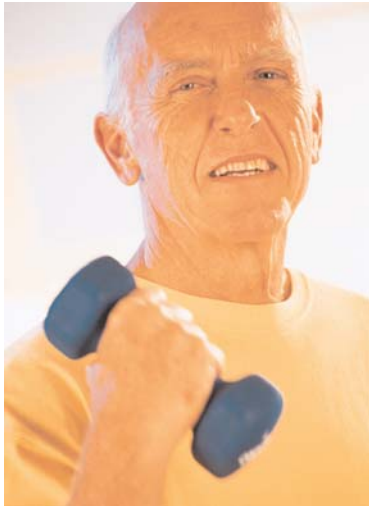




February 2010

Maintaining Bone Health as We Age



The National Osteoporosis Foundation estimates that osteoporosis is a major health threat for 55% of people 50 years of age or older. Ten million people—80% of them women—have osteoporosis, and almost 34 million people have low bone mass and are at an increased risk to develop the disease. With one in two women and one in four men over the age of 50 experiencing an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime, this means that there will be a lot of broken bones.

Good bone health is important to maintain independence as we age. While there is no magic bullet to keep bones strong, one relatively new approach is zoledronic acid, administered as a once-a-year injection. Along with a good diet and weight-bearing exercises, it can help keep osteoporosis in check.

Bone is living tissue that is constantly being built up and destroyed. As we age, bone destruction outpaces new bone formation, leading to weak, easily broken bones. **Used to prevent or slow this process by stimulating the body to form more new bone, zoledronic acid is given intravenously by a health care professional.** Not everyone can take this drug, and it may cause side effects, so talk to your physician about whether zoledronic acid is right for you. Other bisphosphonates, which can be taken orally, may be used.

It is not enough to simply get a yearly zoledronic acid injection or oral medication and then forget about your bone health. **To form new bone, your body needs calcium, a mineral most people get too little of in their diet.** Daily calcium and vitamin D supplements usually are recommended to support bone building. Your family physician can tell you how much of these supplements you should take.

The final key to good bone health is engaging in weight-bearing exercise on a regular basis. Exercises that make your muscles work against gravity, such as walking, jogging, aerobics and weight lifting, strengthen bones and stimulate new bone formation. Studies have shown that moderate weight lifting produces significant benefits in older individuals, even if they do not begin to exercise with weights until their 70s, 80s or even 90s. Regardless of your age or physical limitations, we can develop an individualized program to improve your strength, balance and bone health.