

Active Women Curb Osteoporosis The Need to Test and Treat



BY RACHAEL POST

It's Wednesday morning, and the members of the Oakland Women's Rowing Club, who call themselves the Ladies of the Lake, are rowing again on Lake Merritt in Oakland, California. Their median age is 74, and some of them suffer from osteoporosis and arthritis.

Eleanor Smithbauer, a spirited 99 year old with osteoporosis, did not begin rowing until she was 61. Now, almost 40 years later, although she cannot see or hear, she continues to row as she has every week.

"I want to be active as long as I can; I exercise everyday." She smiled, "You can't follow me around."

Many members say that rowing gives them upper body strength and provides good exercise to combat osteoporosis, and they point out how important careful technique is. A number of members also take medicine for osteoporosis or to decrease their risk of developing it. One rower, Rita Brevet, 73, takes bisphosphonate therapy once a week as a preventative measure.

These women prove that osteoporosis doesn't have to be a losing matter. Taking preventative steps, like exercising and getting enough calcium, is important because bone is a living tissue that is constantly broken down and rebuilt. When a person has osteoporosis—literally, porous bones—

tissue is not being replaced as quickly as it is lost. Calcium, medication and exercise work against this process.

Another rowing member, Anna Pugatch, 80, started rowing 22 years ago and has not developed osteoporosis. But that hasn't stopped her granddaughter, Rachel, who came along to row that morning from thinking about this disease.

"I'm not worried about my grandma, she's taken care of herself since she was young" said Rachel, who is 15. "I'm worried about osteoporosis for myself because I don't drink milk, ever since I was weaned off the bottle."

She has reason to be concerned now. "Osteoporosis is a childhood disease that's manifested in the later adult years," said Cindy Horn, who has worked as a physical therapist for 20 years. "It's like retirement money. If you lay down enough bone in the early years it's kind of like a savings account. People who put away a lot of money early don't run out later; but those running on low or empty have no

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Active Women Curb Osteoporosis

reserve at the end.” This can result in low bone density, Horn said, which puts people at risk for fractures.

Horn recommends plenty of milk, or even calcium-rich orange juice, and weight-bearing exercise. “For people with osteopenia, even jumping is great because the pounding effect encourages bone building.”

Many women don’t know they have the disease until they are tested and diagnosed. Bettie Brown of Roseville, California, was skiing and rafting—high-risk activities for breaking a bone—without knowing she had osteoporosis. She was diagnosed by a bone density test at a health fair sponsored by FORE in Northern California. “I’m glad I was

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tested, because I like to know what’s really going on in my body,” the 88 year old asserted.

Having osteoporosis has not slowed her down, even though she lost two inches in height. “I’ve been pretty active all my life,” Brown said. “I’m not very keen on housework so it gives me an excuse to get out of the house.”

Brown continues to exercise by working out, riding her bike and hiking, although her doctor convinced her to give up skiing because of the high risk. However, having osteoporosis did not stop her from recently participating in a six-week adventure tour in Thailand and Vietnam.

YOUNGER WOMEN ARE AT RISK TOO

Although the disease mostly affects people like Brown who are postmenopausal, it can also affect younger women. Bones reach their peak mass around age 30, and after that bone tissue begins to deteriorate, a process that is significantly heightened at menopause when estrogen levels drop off.

“Women can lose 3 to 5 percent of their bone density per year immediately after menopause without estrogen replacement,” Horn stressed.

After breaking a number of bones, Dee Dee Owen was diagnosed with osteoporosis at the early age of 38.

“I broke a shoulder, then two ribs and finally my hip in skiing accidents,” Owen said. “My husband insisted I get checked because of all the fractures.”

Over 300,000 hip fractures

occur annually in America and 50% of these people will not walk or live independently again. Owen recommends that women talk to their mothers and sisters about their family history to find out if others have had a history of repeated fractures. She also insists that they get screened for osteoporosis.

“You wouldn’t expect someone that young to have it, but it can happen,” Horn said. “Evidence suggests that 60 percent of bone density is hereditary—this is one of the most important risk factors. But tragically, a lot of older people who have fractures are never checked for osteoporosis.”

Since her diagnosis Owen also gave up skiing, but incorporated other exercises regularly. She goes to the gym, golfs and hikes in the mountains of Switzerland where she now lives. “I think exercise makes all the difference,” she urged.

Owen, now 45, is premenopausal and takes medication. “I am impressed with how much improvement in bone density I’ve had,” she said. In her test last December, Owen learned she had gained bone density and reversed the effects of osteoporosis, downgrading to osteopenia, low bone density, or the stage before osteoporosis develops.

With treatment, physical activity and a determination to live with and fight osteoporosis, Owen and other women are reversing the debilitating effects of bone loss and leading full active lives. ■

When we find it, we can fight it

We have many things to be thankful for as we approach Osteoporosis Awareness Month. Among the most important is the increasing awareness about healthy aging. People want to lead active, independent lives as they age. But osteoporosis can quietly and quickly diminish a person’s ability to do even the routines of daily living.

Osteoporosis seriously impacts healthy aging and is now called an epidemic. New data from the National Osteoporosis Foundation shows that osteoporosis affects 44 million Americans (up from 28 million in 1995) at an annual rate of \$17 billion in health costs. 1 in 2 women and 1 in 8 men will develop the disease, which we now know is treatable. Knowing your risk factors, understanding your current health condition, and making lifestyle changes can have a remarkable impact in reducing the effects of the disease.

FORE’s theme for Osteoporosis Awareness Month is **When We Find It, We Can Fight It**. We want people to recognize their risk for osteoporosis and talk to their doctors about the value of getting a bone density test. When you know your bone density, you and your doctor can determine appropriate prevention and treatment strategies to stay healthy.

There are as many as 50% of people over 50 years with low bone mass who do not know it. Please do not be one of the unsuspecting ones. Know your bone density and what you need to do to protect your bones. They are yours for life.



Kathleen M. Cody
Executive Director

Foundation for Osteoporosis Research and Education

May is Osteoporosis Awareness Month

MAY EVENTS

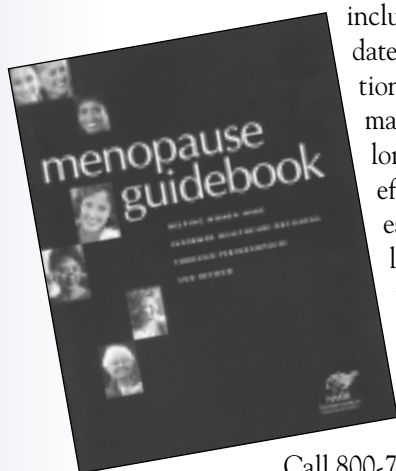
- 5/3 Arthritis Summit, Sacramento**
Conference on latest osteoporosis data in California
Contact Jeanne Alongi, Chief COPE, DHS
(916) 327-9733
- 5/3 Celebrate Osteoporosis & Arthritis Month**
Rivercats Baseball Game, Sacramento
Contact Jeanne Alongi, Chief COPE, DHS
(916) 327-9733
- 5/4 Health Fair, Bon Air**
Bone Density Screening
Contact FORE (510) 832-2663 x 13
- 5/9 Osteoporosis & Arthritis Public Lecture**
Summit Health Education Center, Oakland
Contact Dion Ward, Arthritis Foundation
1-800-464-6240
- 5/14 Menopause and HRT Use, A Public Lecture**
Dr. Risa Kagan, Co-Medical Director, FORE
Matilda Brown Home, 360 42nd St., Oakland
2 hours CE credit, California BRN
Donation optional • Contact Kim Marsh,
Matilda Brown Home (510) 658-5565
- 5/15 Northern California Bone and Mineral Club**
Dr. Felicia Cosman, Clinical Director, National
Osteoporosis Foundation
(See page 6 for more information.)
- 5/16 Osteoporosis & Arthritis Public Lecture**
Institute on Aging, San Francisco
Contact Dion Ward, Arthritis Foundation
1-800-464-6240
- 5/16-17 Bay Area Senior Injury Prevention Conference**
Contact Colleen Campbell, County of Alameda EMS
(510) 618-2047
- 5/20 Osteoporosis & Arthritis Public Lecture**
Mount Diablo Women's Health Clinic, Walnut Creek
Contact Dion Ward, Arthritis Foundation 1-800-464-6240
- 5/25 Celebrate Osteoporosis & Arthritis Month**
Oakland A's Baseball Game, Oakland
Contact FORE (510) 832-2663 x 14

For a complete list of events around Northern California celebrating Osteoporosis Awareness Month, see www.fore.org.

Ready to Learn More?

MENOPAUSE GUIDEBOOK: HELPING WOMEN MAKE INFORMED HEALTHCARE DECISIONS THROUGH PERIMENOPAUSE AND BEYOND

Created for patients by The North American Menopause Society (NAMS), the book



includes up to date educational information on long-term effects of estrogen loss, therapy options, and osteoporosis.

Call 800-774-5342

for more information. A Braille edition is also available.

ALSO FROM NAMS, THE MANAGEMENT OF POSTMENOPAUSAL OSTEOPOROSIS POSITION STATEMENT

We highly recommend this new statement for physicians, reviewed and compiled by experts (including FORE's Co-Medical Director Risa Kagan, MD). The importance of identifying risk of fracture, reducing risk factors, and medication are discussed, making the article an excellent primer on osteoporosis care in 2002. Find it at www.menopause.org.

WWW.FORE.ORG

Welcome to our new home! FORE is growing, and our website is too. Find out the latest medical news, when we will be doing bone density testing in your town, and order our new "Osteoporosis: Guidelines for the Physician."



WALK TALL! AN EXERCISE PROGRAM FOR THE PREVENTION & TREATMENT OF OSTEOPOROSIS

We hear from so many of you that you want easy and



effective exercises specifically for osteoporosis. Written by Sara Meeks, a physical therapist, this book is packed full with exercises that are safe and can really make a difference. Call 1-800-525-6902 to order. ■

Albert P. Rowe Memorial Award



Albert P. Rowe Memorial Award winner Susan Greenspan, MD and FORE Co-Medical Director, Elliott N. Schwartz, MD, at the Rowe Memorial Dinner, October 2001. FORE's inaugural tribute recognized a researcher striving to improve clinical practice in osteoporosis, to increase physician knowledge, and to develop new ways to apply existing information.

Finally, an osteoporosis exercise class for you!



Researchers are now pointing to exercise as a crucial part of a long and healthy life. This is why the physical therapists at OsteoLife have teamed up with FORE and designed a group exercise class for people who have or are at risk for osteoporosis. Previous participants have experienced improved posture, balance, and strength.

Summer classes are planned in the Oakland area.

The cost is \$175, and it is taught by licensed physical therapists. If you or someone

you know is interested, call 510-832-2663 ext. 41. ■

Where can I get a bone density test?

FORE is now offering the Bay Area community three central DXA testing locations. Welcome to all of our new Walnut Creek patients! We have outfitted this site with the newest equipment, and as always, an expert staff. As a patient at any of our Oakland, San Ramon, or Walnut Creek offices, you can expect to receive answers to osteoporosis education questions and the highest quality care. The Walnut Creek office also celebrates a unique partnership with the Muir Orthopaedic Specialists to provide convenient osteoporosis treatment. To make an appointment for any of our locations, call 510-832-2663.



We also provide pDXA testing all over Northern California through a partnership with Longs Drugstores. To learn when we will be at a Longs in your area, call us or visit www.fore.org. ■

FORE's Research Program Flourishes

Since this time last year, FORE's research department expanded yet again! Currently we are conducting 22 clinical studies with our largest staff ever. We are privileged to lead a vast array of cutting edge osteoporosis prevention and treatment trials, as well as other types of women's health research. We are also conducting trials focusing on ethnic minorities,

an important opportunity for our surrounding communities.

Of course, without your participation, none of this would be possible. So call us today, and join over 75 Bay Area postmenopausal women who are helping to expand our knowledge of osteoporosis!

For more information:
510-832-2663 ext. 55 or
www.fore.org. ■



ASK THE DOCTOR

ELLIOTT N. SCHWARTZ, MD, FORE Co-MEDICAL DIRECTOR • DEE STEINBERG, FORE BONE DENSITY TESTING MANAGER

Q I KNOW I NEED A BONE DENSITY TEST, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHICH KIND TO GET. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PERIPHERAL DXA AND CENTRAL DXA?

Peripheral DXA (pDXA) measures bone density at your forearm, finger, or other appendicular site. Central DXA measures your bone density at the hip and spine.

The smaller pDXA machine is a wonderful screening tool. Its portability makes it ideal for assessing many people, such as at health fairs or worksites. Because of its low cost, accuracy, and wider availability, pDXA is an ideal choice for the man or woman who wants to take control of his or her own health. Additionally, you do not need a physician's order to obtain a pDXA.

Central DXA requires a physician's prescription. It is a comprehensive test that when repeated can tell your physician whether bone gain or loss is taking place.

If you are taking a medication to increase your bone density, the only way to measure its effectiveness is with central DXA.

This brings us to the question of who should get a DXA and when should they get one? Ideally, women should consider getting a baseline pDXA or central DXA just before going through menopause and men should consider this after age 60 (unless risk factors are present). This first test, in comparison to later tests, will tell your physician whether you are actively losing bone or

merely have a history of low bone density.

If you are diagnosed with osteopenia or low bone density (T score between -1 and -2.5), please do not panic. Just as some people are shorter or taller than others, not all people build the same amount of bone. If you are one of those

peripheral site, it is highly likely that you will have low bone density at a central site. Discordance or variability of site measurements occurs most frequently in younger patients. This happens because bone loss does not occur evenly throughout the body. However, the older we get, the more

Major Risk Factors: age, genetics, lifestyle (especially nutrition), menopausal status

individuals, you should make an increased effort to get calcium and exercise.

We would also encourage you to speak with your physician about your results.

Bone density measurements do not vary considerably from site to site on your body. If you have low bone density at a

evenly our bones lose their density.

I believe that either method, pDXA or central DXA, is perfectly valid. Raising awareness of osteoporosis and when necessary, bringing people to treatment, is what's important. Remember, when we find it...we can fight it. ■

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2002 Provider Education Calendar

May

5/15 Northern California Bone and Mineral Club presents “Do Bisphosphonates Work in the Elderly?” by Dr. Felicia Cosman, an osteoporosis expert and Clinical Director of the National Osteoporosis Foundation. CME credit will be given. 6:00–8:30 pm • San Francisco, California • Waterfront Restaurant & Café

October

10/16 Founders Award Dinner—an educational dinner and lecture honoring a prominent researcher in the field of osteoporosis. CME credit will be given. 6:00–9:30 pm • San Francisco, California • Location to be announced

November

11/1 Center of Excellence—an educational seminar covering osteoporosis basics, prevention and treatment options, and new research. CME credit will be provided. 8:00 am–5:30 pm • Pleasanton, California • Location to be announced

FOR ALL EVENTS, CALL 510-832-2663 EXT 14 OR SEE OUR WEBSITE TO REGISTER.

How to Contact Us

FORE *Front* is published bi-annually by FORE's Education Program, and is provided as a free resource to the community. We encourage you to share the newsletter with friends and family, and we're happy to add them to the mailing list.

Learn about bone density testing, education programs, and research opportunities at www.fore.org or call toll free 888-266-3015.

FORE is pleased to offer this educational resource at no cost to the reader. We thank Procter & Gamble Pharmaceuticals, Inc. and Eli Lilly and Company, whose educational grants made this newsletter possible. Neither company exercises control over content. ■



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