

Bone Health and the Fear of Osteoporosis

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About a year ago, after the Vioxx and Celebrex scare, I predicted that we would be hearing similar things about the osteoporosis drugs (Fosamax, Actonel, etc) and about the statin drugs (Lipitor, Crestor, etc.). Recently it was revealed that women taking these osteoporosis drugs were having problems with the health of their jaw bones. The unfortunate truth is that for every negative fact that the drug companies reluctantly reveal, there are probably ten more that they keep hidden. After all, they essentially control many of our politicians, and therefore the FDA and Medicare. They can, and do, act with impunity.

In addition, as discussed in T. Colin Campbell's landmark book, The China Study (see below), the way the drug (and food) industries maintain their status and profits is to spread misinformation. They don't need to do real science--they just have to create some confusion, or pay off some academic chairmen to promote their agendas. The American public is legitimately confused by their tactics. Sorry to sound so angry and paranoid, but read the book and reach your own conclusions.

So what are we to do? The short answer is, get the right information and make the gradual changes to your lifestyle that will enable you to achieve optimal health.

Let me begin by questioning a few of the notions that we have about bone health. How many of the following statements do you think are true?:

- 1) Calcium supplements are essential for bone health
- 2) Bone loss begins in the peri-menopause and is an inevitability without estrogen
- 3) Milk is good for bones
- 4) Vitamin D, while good for bones, is risky to take above the RDA of 400 IU per day.
- 5) Osteoporosis is genetically determined and therefore there's not much we can do to change this.
- 6) Protein makes us strong.

The answer to all these questions is False. Let's go through these notions and provide some real scientific evidence.

1) Calcium supplements are not essential by themselves. Numerous studies have shown that calcium alone is inadequate to prevent bone loss in the menopause and in pregnancy. It amazes me how many women faithfully take their calcium, which

does close to nothing, while ignoring many of the other supplements that we know are beneficial, such as fish oils. The reason that calcium by itself is inadequate, is that without proper bowel function, and a balance of diet and supplements, including vitamin D, magnesium, boron and strontium (and others), calcium cannot be properly absorbed and utilized. In my opinion, there is adequate calcium in a balanced diet. This compartmentalized approach to supplementation, rather than looking a nutrition as a whole, is the problem.

2) Bone loss and bone growth occur throughout life--in fact it is the interference with this process that makes the Fosamax-like drugs problematic. Bone formation begins in uterus and continues throughout life. While it is true that with decline of estrogen, there can be a loss of bone, this loss is moderated by numerous factors that include: exercise before and after menopause, vitamin D levels throughout life (I just saw a 12 year old girl with a blood vitamin D level so low that it was immeasurable!), other supplements and diet (see below), and the presence of inflammation (which accelerates bone loss). Artificial estrogens and progesterones are not the answer, because they cause other toxicities. Some women can benefit from bio-identical hormones (the same ones our bodies make), but the drug companies cannot patent what God made, so they are not promoted and are underutilized.

3) Milk is not a great food. The dairy industry has been marketing to schools and children for decades, to the point that if you hear the word "milk" you tend to think "healthy bones and teeth". However, the animal proteins and fat that are in milk are in many cases pro-inflammatory and allergenic, causing more problems than they solve. T. Colin Campbell, the author mentioned above, grew up on a dairy farm and served on many governmental nutritional panels until he began speaking the truth about milk and the American food industry.

4) The RDA of Vitamin D is inadequate. In fact, even the Journal of the American Medical Association recently published an article that stated that 400 IU is inadequate to prevent osteoporosis. The only sources of Vitamin D are sunlight and milk. In our latitude, we can only get proper sunlight half of the year. And while cow and soy milk is fortified

with vitamin D (after being destroyed by pasteurization), a whole quart only contains 400 IU. Vitamin D not only affects bone, it affects mood (involved with Seasonal Affective Disorder and intractable depression/anxiety), immune system (including several autoimmune diseases such as lupus, multiple sclerosis, thyroid disease and propensity toward infection and cancer), and pain modulation. Approximately 70% of my pain patients have inadequate levels of Vitamin D. At high doses, Vitamin D can be risky, so it should only be taken under the supervision of a qualified practitioner with blood monitoring.

5) Only 10-20% of illness is genetically determined; the rest is influenced by lifestyle--therefore we have much more control of our fate than we are led to believe. While genes do influence our health trends, including osteoporosis, they are like switches that can be turned on or off. What turns them on or off is our lifestyle--which includes diet, supplementation, sleep, exercise, stress levels, etc.

6) Protein intake is not necessarily good for us, especially of the quality and quantity eaten by Americans. We are obsessed with protein in our diet; however, Americans clearly eat excessive amounts. Too much protein, especially animal protein, causes increased excretion of calcium and increased inflammation in the body, which also accelerates bone loss. Vegetarians have a proven lower rate of osteoporosis.

What To Do

- 1) Learn more about nutrition and supplementation. See reference list.
- 2) Regular weight-bearing exercise in critical, not only for the lower extremities, but also the arms, upper spine and even jaw. Yoga easily provides this type of exercise.
- 3) Reduce or even eliminate animal sources of protein and fat, especially dairy--limit portions to those that add flavor, such as just one or two ounces per day. Don't worry about protein and calcium--think more of a balanced, whole food, plant based diet that will provide adequate protein, calcium, and vitamins and minerals.
- 4) Seek consultation regarding a lifestyle and nutritional program, including appropriate tests, such as Vitamin D and Magnesium levels.

Most industries today market by fear. However, knowledge is power, and inspires the changes in our lifestyle that not only brings us toward health, but

positively affects our families, communities, and our planet.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This general information should not be used to make decisions about health care without the involvement of a knowledgeable practitioner.

For More Information

- O Campbell, T. Colin: The China Study: The Most Comprehensive Study Ever Conducted and the Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss and Long-term Health. Dallas: Benbella, 2004. ISBN 1932-100-385.
- O Challein, Jack: The Inflammation Syndrome: The Complete Nutritional Program to Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease, Arthritis, Diabetes, Allergies, and Asthma. NY: Wiley, 2003. ISBN 0471-478-814
- O Lieberman, Shari: Real Vitamin & Mineral Book: Definitive Guide to Designing Your Personal Supplement Program, 3rd Ed. NY: Avery, 2003. ISBN 1583-331-522.
- O Pressman, A: The Complete Idiot's Guide to Vitamins and Minerals, 2nd Ed. Alpha, 2000. ISBN 0028-639-642.
- O Christiane Northrup M.D.: The Wisdom of Menopause: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing During the Change. Bantam, 2001. 0553-801-21X.
- O See my related articles on; Detoxification, Elimination and Simplification and What We Really Need
- O My website, www.c4oh.org, has helpful articles on related topics

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