

# Ask Your Pharmacist: Healthy Aging

(NAPSA)—Older Americans, more active than ever before, should take preventative measures to keep their bones strong and healthy. According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, an estimated 10 million Americans currently have osteoporosis, with another 34 million estimated to have low bone mass, which puts them at increased risk for the disease.

Loralie Lachtara, RPh, answers questions about osteoporosis and how older Americans can keep their bones strong to ensure a healthy and active future.

## **What is osteoporosis, and what causes it?**

Osteoporosis is a disease that affects your bones, making them fragile and causing them to break easily. One in five American women will likely develop osteoporosis. It can occur in men as well, but because men have larger skeletons than women, they don't start to lose bone until later in life. An inactive lifestyle, heavy alcohol use and smoking can all increase your risk for osteoporosis. You also have an increased risk of developing it if there is a history of the disease in your family or if you have had any fractures after the age of 50.

## **How do I know if my bones are healthy or thinning?**

Osteoporosis can be difficult to detect because it has no symptoms. It can silently weaken your bones until they eventually break. A bone mineral density (BMD) test is the only way to tell if you have osteoporosis or not. The test is painless and easy to perform. It measures how strong your bones



are and can help determine if you're at risk for osteoporosis.

## **What can I do to make my bones stronger and healthier?**

The best way to prevent bone disease is to live a healthy lifestyle through a good diet and exercise. A diet with lots of calcium and vitamin D is essential. Calcium helps to strengthen your bones, while vitamin D makes the calcium more effective. There are many over-the-counter supplements available if you're not getting enough calcium or vitamin D in your diet. You should ask your doctor or pharmacist to help you pick out one that is right for you.

## **Where can I get more information if I need it?**

Your pharmacy is a great resource. You can go to [www.cvs.com](http://www.cvs.com) to find a CVS/pharmacy nearby or call a CVS.com pharmacist at (888) 607-4287.