



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## Keeping Your Bones Strong For Life

(NAPSA)—It's never too early to think about bone loss. The good news is that, partly thanks to the large number of television ads on the topic, along with improved methods of detecting early-stage bone loss, more people today are paying attention to their bone health. And it's a good thing. The National Osteoporosis Foundation reports that an estimated 44 million Americans, or more than half (55 percent) of those 50 years of age or older, are at risk for osteoporosis. And it's not just women who are at risk. Although women are four times more likely than men to develop the disease, men also suffer from osteoporosis.

Once a woman reaches menopause, at about the age of 51½, she can lose up to 30 percent of her skeleton within three years. So says noted expert Warren Levy, Ph.D., president and CEO of Unigene Laboratories, one of the companies on the forefront of the search for effective new drugs that can treat osteoporosis.

Dr. Levy and other experts recommend the following to prevent bone loss:

- After menopause, undergo a bone scan every one to two years.
- Check your family's osteoporosis history to see if you may be at risk.
- Incorporate sufficient doses of calcium and vitamin D into your daily diet, including dairy products and dark-green vegetables.
- Avoid smoking and the excessive consumption of alcohol and caffeine.
- Start—or continue—a weight-bearing exercise program.

"The longer we live, the more important bone health becomes. Fortunately, if osteoporosis does develop, there are treatments available," says Dr. Levy.

Both the American Association of Endodontists (endontists are the



**A woman can lose up to 30 percent of her skeleton by the time she is 54½ years of age.**

specialists who perform root canals) and the Food and Drug Administration recently issued warnings that there may be a link between bisphosphonates—a class of drugs commonly used to treat osteoporosis—and jaw decay. Bisphosphonates, however, are not the only method of treatment available.

Dr. Levy advises that alternative osteoporosis drugs exist; for example, nasal calcitonin products, which have a long history of safety and efficacy. Calcitonin is a naturally occurring hormone that helps the body regulate calcium levels. It is found in products such as Fortical®. Calcitonin-based products have been used to treat osteoporosis for more than 30 years with very few side effects and can be taken by patients with any other medication. This is an important feature for elderly patients. Nasal calcitonin products have been shown to decrease fracture risk by 40 to 60 percent and also help maintain proper bone density.

According to professionals, the benefits afforded by any osteoporosis drug stop unless you continue to take it, so it will need to be taken for life. "Be sure that whatever you are taking is not only effective but also safe for long-term use," Dr. Levy advises.

For more information, log on to [www.unigene.com](http://www.unigene.com).