



HEALTH AWARENESS

Make No Bones About It

(NAPSA)—What you don't know about osteoporosis could hurt you.

That's because osteoporosis—a disease that makes bones fragile and more likely to break—is a serious health threat to both women and men. And because early bone loss often has no symptoms, people may not realize they have osteoporosis until they've suffered a fracture. While low bone mass and osteoporosis are a potential danger to 44 million Americans, there are things patients can do to protect their bones.

The American College of Physicians (ACP)—a professional organization comprised of more than 126,000 internal medicine physicians and medical students—developed two guidelines on osteoporosis. One guideline addresses diagnosis and the other addresses management of osteoporosis. The guidelines were recently published in the medical journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Know Your Risk

Older men and women—especially those 65 or older—should have a DXA (dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry) scan to measure bone density. They should also be assessed for risk factors including:

- Low body weight or weight loss in recent years
- Physical inactivity
- Fractures without substantial trauma
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Smoking



- Long-term use of certain drugs, such as corticosteroids or drugs that are used to treat certain types of cancer
- Having a low calcium or vitamin D intake
- Excessive alcohol consumption.

Talk to Your Doctor About Treatment

According to the most recent ACP guideline, physicians should offer drug treatment to men and women who have been diagnosed with osteoporosis or had a previous fracture not caused by significant trauma. The guideline also recommends that doctors consider drug treatment to prevent fracture for those who are at risk of developing osteoporosis.

There is reliable information that bisphosphonates (the most commonly prescribed medications for osteoporosis) are reasonable options for beginning drug treatment, as some of them decrease the risk of spinal, nonspinal and hip fractures. However, the choice of drug treatment should be based on the risks, benefits and adverse effects of various medications.