



Health Update



New Studies Show Osteoporosis On The Rise: What Can Be Done To Stop It

(NAPSA)—In the United States an estimated eight million women aged 50 years and older suffer from osteoporosis and another 22 million are at risk for developing the disease, according to the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF). Yet, recent studies show that nearly 72 percent of the five million women aged 65 years and over with osteoporosis have not received a bone density test or treatment for the disease. When left untreated, osteoporosis weakens bones, which can lead to fractures.

Osteoporosis is on the rise. New studies project that the number of women with osteoporosis will increase to 10.5 million by 2020. This rise in prevalence is projected to have a significant impact on the number of osteoporotic fractures.

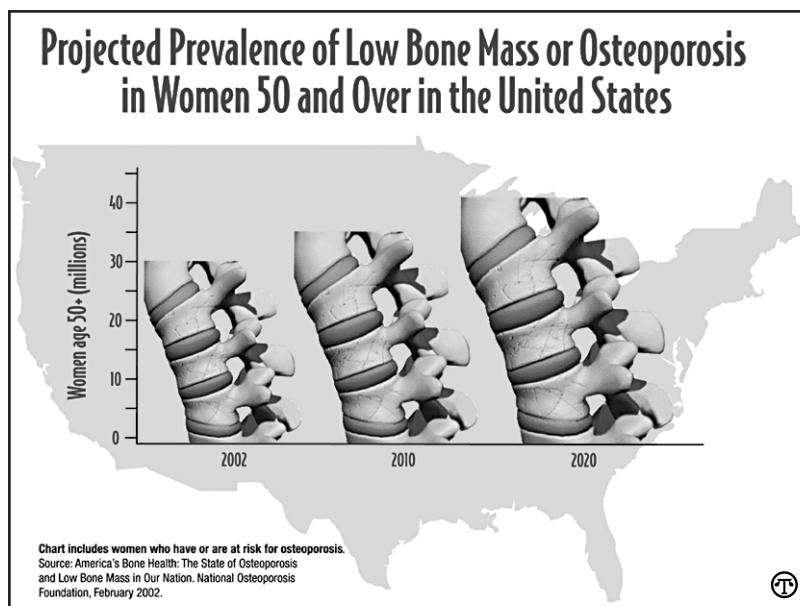
"The vast majority of the senior women at risk for osteoporosis fracture remain undiagnosed and untreated," said Kenneth Saag, M.D., Department of Medicine, Division of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology of the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

"Our studies predict that the prevalence of osteoporosis will grow significantly during this decade and further underscore the importance of the prevention and early diagnosis and treatment of this disease."

Preventive Measures

There are steps a woman can take over her lifetime to help reduce her chances of developing postmenopausal osteoporosis and include:

- Follow a balanced diet.
- Take adequate amounts of calcium and vitamin D. According to the NOF, the recommended calcium intake is 1200-1500 mg/day for adults and 400-800 IU of vitamin D daily for individuals at risk of deficiency (elderly, chronically ill, housebound, and/or institutionalized individuals).
- Engage in weight-bearing exercise such as walking, climbing



stairs, tennis, jogging, or dancing.

- Avoid smoking.
- Ask her physician whether a bone mineral density (BMD) test is right for her.

However, it is important to note that following menopause, these measures may not be enough to prevent osteoporosis.

What is a BMD Test?

A BMD test is a safe, fast, and painless procedure that:

- Measures bone mass and can help determine fracture risk
- May detect osteoporosis before a fracture occurs
- Can be used to monitor a patient's response to osteoporosis treatment

Who Should Get Tested?

Because osteoporosis can be a silent disease, it's important for women at risk to ask their physician whether a BMD test is right for them. According to the NOF, the following women should be tested:

- All postmenopausal women under the age of 65 who have one or more additional risk factors for osteoporotic fracture besides menopause.
- All women 65 and older

regardless of additional risk factors.

- Postmenopausal women who experience a fracture.
- Women who are considering therapy for osteoporosis, if BMD testing would facilitate the decision.
- Women who have been on HRT for prolonged periods.

Osteoporosis and Hormone Replacement Therapy

Women thinking about discontinuing hormone replacement therapy (HRT) should consider their risk for developing osteoporosis. Studies have shown that significant bone loss can occur in postmenopausal women as early as the first year after discontinuation of HRT. A postmenopausal woman stopping HRT should consider talking to her physician about her risk of developing osteoporosis and about getting a bone mineral density test.

Prevention and Treatment Therapies

Women at risk for osteoporosis should consider talking to their physicians about getting a bone mineral density test for low bone mass and whether prescription therapies may be appropriate.