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Men and Osteoporosis

Many people consider osteoporosis a women's disease. That would be a big mistake because men get osteoporosis as well. Conservative estimates are 10% of all men over 50 get osteoporosis, and the percentage goes up with age. This is one area where there's a lack of research on men probably because of my opening statement. Well, we don't have to wait for all the research to come in. We can take action.

Bone responds to stress, so the first thing men have to do is weight-bearing exercise—both cardiovascular as well as weight training. In addition, it's important to get some calcium as we get older—we just don't drink as much milk, or we drink soda and coffee instead. A calcium supplement is a reasonable alternative at about 500 mg per day. Quitting smoking is another big positive to protect bones, whether men or women. Finally, increasing vitamin D can also help bones.

Should men get a bone scan like I recommend in *Health Tips for Women*? It's probably not necessary until a man is 70 or older, but the lack of research leaves the answer in doubt. My philosophy is when in doubt, check it out. At the very least, talk about it with your healthcare professional. Men who are smokers, very thin, have small frames, drink more than two alcoholic drinks a day, or who have a poor diet are the prime candidates.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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