

## **Keeping Bones Healthy**

### **Q. Why do I have to worry now about my bones?**

A. Eight out of ten girls and young women don't get enough calcium in their diet to build bones. This may lead to brittle bones and fractures later in life.

### **Q. What happens when you don't get enough calcium?**

A. Most of your body's calcium is stored in your bones. A small amount is used for muscle contraction and blood clotting. When you don't have enough calcium for these functions, your body takes calcium from your bones. Over time this can leave your bones pitted, brittle, and easy to break. Another sign of too little calcium is tooth loss and thinning of the tooth-supporting bone during mid-life.

### **Q. What is osteoporosis?**

A. Osteoporosis, the brittle-bone disease, can develop from long-term damage done to your bones by a lack of calcium. Unfortunately it is not easily detected. When it becomes apparent (shrinking, stooping, fractures), it's usually too late to do anything.

### **Q. How can I increase calcium in my diet?**

A. If you are between the ages of 11 and 25 years old, pregnant or breastfeeding, you need 1200 mg. of calcium each day. Adult women need 1000 mg. If you are over 50 and not taking estrogen, you need 1500 mg. You can get this from the food you eat and from calcium supplements. Foods like skim milk, yogurt, cheese, leafy green vegetables, tofu, or calcium fortified orange juice are high in calcium. The daily value of 400-800 IU of vitamin D is important in the absorption of calcium. You can get what you need from Vitamin

D fortified milk, a multivitamin, or 15 minutes of sunshine or from Vitamin D supplements.

### **Q. Do I need supplements?**

A. If you can't get enough calcium and Vitamin D in your diet, you may need to take supplements. Some suggestions for calcium: Tums 500 Calcium Supplement, Caltrate, Citracal, and One-A-Day Calcium Plus. Take these according to label directions. Some suggestions for Vitamin D are individual Vitamin D pills or a multivitamin tablet with Vitamin D. If you are on a progesterone only form of contraception, such as Depo-Provera, you need a calcium and a Vitamin D supplement.

**Q. What else can I do to keep my bones healthy?**

A. Stop smoking and limit or avoid alcohol and caffeine. These can interfere with your body's ability to absorb calcium. **Exercise**, especially weight-bearing exercises, will help to build bone. These include, walking, jogging, tennis, and step aerobics. **Some studies have shown that the birth control method, Depo-Provera, can cause reversible bone loss.** This may be reversed with a good diet, an adequate intake of calcium, and weight bearing exercises, and when the Depo-Provera is stopped.