



# April News

## What you should know about Osteoporosis

### What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a bone disease characterized by low bone mass and deterioration of the bone structure leading to increased fracture risk.

- Almost 2 million Canadians are living with osteoporosis.
- 1 in 4 women and at least 1 in 8 men over 50 have osteoporosis.
- There is an excess of 20% mortality within the year following a hip fracture.

The good news is that osteoporosis is preventable. Read more to learn what you should know to prevent fractures due to osteoporosis.

### What factors increase the risk of developing osteoporosis?

#### **Non modifiable risk factors:**

- History of fracture
- History of fracture in a first degree relative
- Female sex
- Advanced age
- Caucasian

#### **Modifiable risk factors:**

- Tobacco use
- Low body weight <58kg
- Estrogen deficiency (early menopause)
- Low calcium intake (<400mg/day)
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Alcoholism
- Inadequate physical activity
- Certain medications (eg: oral corticosteroids)

### Is there anything I can do to lower my risk?

**To reduce the risk of fractures focus on removing the modifiable risk factors.**

Adequate calcium and vitamin D intake in conjunction with weight bearing exercise (eg: walking) early in life can increase peak bone mass which has been shown to improve bone density later in life. Milk and milk products are excellent sources of calcium and some are fortified with vitamin D. Other foods that contain calcium are beans, lentils, broccoli, and fortified orange juice. If you are not eating enough of these foods, then you may benefit from Calcium and vitamin D supplementation. **Speak to your pharmacist if supplementing calcium or Vitamin D intake is right for you.**

### Can osteoporosis be cured?

No, so it is very important that you take appropriate steps to prevent this disease. If you are diagnosed with osteoporosis, then your doctor can prescribe medication that helps to prevent more bone loss and increase bone density.

### How do I know if I have osteoporosis?

There are no symptoms until a fracture occurs. That is why it is called a silent disease.



### Who should be screened for osteoporosis?

Because there are no warning signs of osteoporosis, people at high risk (**over 65, and those over 50 with additional risk factors**) should see their physician and have their bone mineral density (BMD) tested. Patients over 30 years old with risk factors for osteoporosis may benefit from BMD testing. This is because bone density starts decreasing after 30 years of age.

### How can I have my bones checked?

There are two types of tests that are used to determine bone density.

1. DEXA (x-ray, requires order by physician)
2. CUBA Clinical (ultrasound, can be done in our pharmacy!)

Take advantage of our osteoporosis clinic on **Tuesday April 5th, and Wednesday April 6th**. We are currently taking appointments. The cost for the assessment is \$20. It includes: **bone density measured by ultrasound, osteoporosis risk assessment, osteoporosis education, personalized counseling, written take home information, and a physician report**. If you want to be screened for osteoporosis and can not attend our clinic, speak to your doctor about getting a bone density test.

**Ask your pharmacist for more information on osteoporosis today!**

## Rx Center— Understanding Alberta Drug Schedules

Have you ever wondered why only certain medications are kept behind the counter?

The province of Alberta in conjunction with National Drug Scheduling Advisory Committee decides how drugs are scheduled. The schedule of the drug refers to the category that the drug falls into. There are different regulations that apply to each category. Since provinces have input into how drugs are scheduled, the regulations that apply to drugs may differ between provinces. Drugs are scheduled based on the risk of taking medications with or without the advice of a healthcare professional. Higher risk medications are placed in schedule 1 while lower risk medication are placed in schedule 3.

In Alberta we have three drug schedules:

**Schedule 1:** Drugs that require a prescription. (eg: Lipitor®, Tylenol® #3, Penicillin)

**Schedule 2:** Drugs that are available only from the pharmacist and do not require a prescription. These medications are found behind the counter (eg: Gravol®, Iron >30mg, Tylenol® #1). To promote safe drug use, a pharmacist ensures that patients are making appropriate selections. To accomplish this, a pharmacist must provide counseling if needed as well as document the sale. Pharmacists are required to ask for an Alberta Health care number and to make a patient profile in the computer.

**Schedule 3:** Drugs that are available without a prescription from the self selection area of a pharmacy (eg: Plan B®, vaginal yeast infection products). A pharmacist must be available if patients require advice.

**Unscheduled:** Drugs not listed in Schedule 1, 2 or 3 may be sold from any retail outlet. You can even find these drugs in a gas station. (e.g.: Tylenol, Aspirin, Ibuprofen)

Why are some drugs behind the counter even though they are listed in schedule 3? Eg. Plan B®

Pharmacies have the ability to store medication behind the counter if they believe that additional counseling is required, or if there is a risk of theft.

## Supplement Spotlight— Glucosamine

What is glucosamine?

Glucosamine is a natural health product that has been found to be useful for the treatment of osteoarthritis. It is derived from the shells of crab, shrimp, lobster and other hard shells.

What is osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis occurs when the cartilage in your joints wears down over time. Common symptoms are pain, stiffness, and grating in the affected joint. See your doctor if you think you might have osteoarthritis.

How does it work?

Glucosamine is a precursor molecule that is important for maintaining the elasticity, strength, and resiliency of the cartilage of movable joints. Glucosamine also has anti-inflammatory properties.

Does Glucosamine have any side effects?

Glucosamine is very well tolerated. Human studies have reported no significant side effects.



Will it work?

There are many studies that show that glucosamine may be effective for the treatment of the symptoms of osteoarthritis.

How much should be taken?

It is recommended to take glucosamine 500mg three times daily for the treatment of osteoarthritis. Glucosamine should be taken for a minimum of 4 weeks in order to see the beneficial effects.

Can anyone take glucosamine?

Glucosamine should be used with caution in people with asthma, diabetes, and kidney dysfunction. There is a lack of evidence for the safety of glucosamine in children, pregnancy, and lactation.

**Ask your pharmacist today if glucosamine supplements are right for you!**

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