

Bone Up On Osteoporosis

Metabolic Bone Center helps improve patients' bone strength

Finding out you have osteoporosis at an early age, while in your 50s, can be a scary experience. Lita Nemeth was diagnosed with osteoporosis, a metabolic bone disorder that increases fracture risk, and wanted to learn what else she could do to manage it beyond taking medicine. After doing some research, Nemeth sought a second opinion from Dr. Deborah Sellmeyer, director of the Johns Hopkins Metabolic Bone Center.

The Johns Hopkins Metabolic Bone Center, dedicated to the prevention and treatment of skeletal disorders and fractures, includes a team of physicians, dietitians and physical and occupational therapists. The team cares for patients like Nemeth, who have diseases that affect bone strength, commonly caused by abnormalities of minerals (such as calcium or phosphorus), vitamin D, bone mass or bone structure.

Osteoporosis, the most common metabolic bone disease, is easily diagnosed by DXA (dual energy X-ray absorptiometry) bone density testing, an on-site service offered at the Metabolic Bone Center. Nemeth had a DXA scan to determine the extent of her osteoporosis. "DXA is safe, non-invasive and painless," says Dr. Sellmeyer. Typically, a DXA scan measures the bone density of the hip, spine, and when appropriate, the forearm. It is one of the most accurate ways to diagnose osteoporosis.

Nemeth praises Dr. Sellmeyer's approach to care. "Dr. Sellmeyer looked at all of the factors affecting my health," says Nemeth. "She had many suggestions for me instead of simply telling me to take medication. She also has a plan for my future care."

"As a middle-aged patient, Ms. Nemeth is an ideal candidate to incorporate nutrition and lifestyle changes into her daily routine as a way to improve her bone health. At her young age, despite having low bone density, her fracture risk is relatively low," says Dr. Sellmeyer. So she recommended dietary and exercise changes for Nemeth, in an effort to strengthen her bones and improve the osteoporosis. Dr. Sellmeyer suggested that Nemeth eat more protein, fruits and vegetables, especially broccoli, and do weight bearing exercises.

For example, Nemeth has an active life and she enjoys running and volunteering with a greyhound dog rescue organization.

Before consulting with Dr. Sellmeyer, Nemeth was advised to stop running and take it easy, for fear of suffering a bone fracture. After Dr. Sellmeyer evaluated her fracture risk using the FRAX® process, based on many risk factors,



Deborah Sellmeyer, M.D.
*Director of the Johns Hopkins
Metabolic Bone Center*

she determined that it was safe for Nemeth to continue running and exercising. Dr. Sellmeyer suggested that Nemeth also add weight training exercises to her routine.

Now, Nemeth is enjoying her on-the-go lifestyle. She is aware of the risks of having osteoporosis, but also knows how to manage them so she can be healthy and active. With these lifestyle changes, Nemeth does not currently need medication to strengthen her bones.

"My experience at Johns Hopkins Bayview is outstanding. The physicians caring for me are all very informed and experienced," says Nemeth. "I appreciate that they are professional and thorough so that I know my treatment plan is the best for me."

—Karen Tong

What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a silent disorder that weakens bones and affects adult men and women of all ages and ethnicities. When untreated, it can lead to fragility fractures, bone deformities and serious disability.

Those at high risk for osteoporosis include older aged men and women with:

- small body size
- history of fractures
- history of steroid use
- intestinal diseases
- organ transplants
- kidney disorders

Osteoporosis often is not diagnosed until a fracture occurs. However, once a fracture happens, a patient is at high risk for additional fractures as well as increased morbidity and mortality, making fracture prevention crucial.

You should have a DXA scan if you:

- are a man over age 70
- are a woman over age 65
- are under age 65 with one of the following risk factors:
 - have a family history of fractures
 - had a fracture after age 45
 - weigh less than 125 lb.
 - are a smoker or consume excessive alcohol
 - have rheumatoid arthritis
 - take medications or have a medical condition that affects bones

To schedule a DXA bone density scan or to learn more about the Johns Hopkins Metabolic Bone Center, please call 410-550-BONE (2663).

Free Seminar Bone Health with Dr. Sellmeyer

Eating for Strong Bones:
Calcium, Vitamin D and More!

April 22
5:30 p.m.

To register, call 410-550-KNOW.

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