



Osteoporosis or Osteopenia and your Fitness Program

Osteoporosis is a degenerative disease where bones become weak and fragile. Osteopenia is the same but a less severe form. The disease is silent, and most often found in the hip, lower and middle back, and wrist.

Listen to your trainer's and doctor's advice. The Dr. will likely recommend calcium supplements at around 1200–1500mg daily. Make sure the calcium supplement is also fortified with vitamin D so that the calcium can be absorbed by the body.

The trainer will design a fitness program to strengthen your bones, and help prevent falls. A study published by the American College of Sports Medicine showed that low intensity exercise such as walking is **INEFFECTIVE** for stimulating bone formation. This means the best way to strengthen bones and prevent falls is by strength training and performing dynamic balance training.

For exercise to be most effective, the strength training needs to be site specific. This means that if the osteoporosis is found in the hips, then appropriate weight bearing forces must be placed on the hips. Therefore, swimming, biking, or floor exercise would be less effective than lunges, squats, and step exercise.

It is common to be anxious about lifting challenging weights or nearly falling during a dynamic balance exercise. Communicate with your trainer about any unusual discomfort, pain, or soreness lasting more than 48 hours.

What you can do

1. Avoid falling—watch where you are walking at all times. Use extreme caution with dangerous environments such as ice, wet leaves, darkness, or sight impaired situations.
2. Take your calcium supplements regularly after first checking with your Dr.

3. Avoid excessive forward, side or rotational bending of the spine. Learn to squat deep to avoid straining your back when picking up objects.
4. If necessary, install additional wall handles in vulnerable places such as the bath tub to assist with balance.
5. Always be sure rugs are not slippery, and nothing is left on the stairs that could cause a fall.
6. Emphasize good posture especially when lifting and avoid long periods of slouching.

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