

Medications That Can Be Bad for Your Bones

If you take a moment to read the tiny contents of the package insert that comes with your prescription drugs, you will see in the section on side effects that there are many that can harm your bones. Some drugs can cause bone loss and some may increase the chance of breaking a bone. If you have certain diseases, you may not have a choice but to take one of these medicines. If you do take certain medicines that can cause bone loss or increase your risk of breaking a bone, it is extra important to take steps to protect your bones.

The most common medicines that can harm your bones include:

- High doses of cortisone-like pills, such as prednisone (more than 5 mg a day).
- More than 250 mcg of thyroid medicines. (If you are managing your thyroid levels in the normal range with lower doses will minimize effects.)
- Drugs that reduce your estrogen or androgen levels.
- Certain diabetes medications.
- Some stomach medications like antacids with aluminum or proton pump inhibitors.
- Some antidepressants, especially selective serotonin receptor uptake inhibitors (SSRI's).
- Some blood thinners and anticoagulants.
- Loop diuretics.
- Some anti-convulsive medications.

If you are taking medicines that can harm your bones, these are some important steps your doctor or health care provider may take to reduce the harmful effects:

- Know your bone density to help inform you about your risk of breaking a bone and to monitor any potential bone loss.
- Use a Fracture Risk Calculator [hyperlink to ABH FRC] to know if you are at high risk for breaking a bone. your health care provider may suggest an osteoporosis medicine to reduce the harmful effects on your skeleton.
- Take as low a dose as possible, for as short a time as possible – but talk with your health care provider before you make any changes.
- Make sure that you get 3-4 servings of a calcium-rich food every day. If you cannot eat dairy or calcium-fortified food, you may need a calcium supplement.
- Be sure that you have an optimal vitamin D level (≥ 30 ng/mL or ≥ 74.9 nmol/L). People with breast cancer and prostate cancer may need higher blood levels of vitamin D.
- Practice great posture and use good body mechanics to prevent spine fractures.
- Strengthen your legs and do balance exercises to prevent falls and fractures.
- Remove trip hazards from your home.

For more information on how these medications impact the skeleton, go to

www.americanbonehealth.org.