



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY YOGA FOR OSTEOPOROSIS (part 2)

In last month's newsletter I explained the meaning of osteoporosis and why yoga is an excellent solution for both osteoarthritis and osteoporosis.

ROUNDED SPINE

Are you reading this newsletter on your computer? Are you sitting up straight or bent over with your spine rounded? If so, pull it up and forward so you are sitting up straight. Why is this important? The curve in your spine is what can sometimes cause a fracture at the front edge of one of your vertebra. The pressure of one vertebra on the top edge of another can cause the front edge of bone to crumble a bit and you get what is called a Wedge fracture. Once you have a wedge fracture, your spine is permanently tilted forward. This tilt can create pressure on the next vertebra and its front edge breaks down and so on. Soon you find you really cannot stand straight even when you try. You have kyphosis (or dowagers hump).

Try raising your computer so that the screen is at eye level and this will help you to sit up straight. Just don't sit with your spine curved - please.

Yoga will help to strengthen the muscles in your back and keep your spine upright. Back bends in yoga are more advantageous and less dangerous than forward bends for people with osteoporosis or osteopenia. The hump-like curve that often develops as we age is exaggerated by bending forward, increasing the pressure and therefore the risk of vertebral fracture. Always bend forward from the hips and keep the back straight.

THE FOOD CONNECTION

In order to prevent osteoporosis it is important to have a diet low in acid foods. When there is too much acid in the body it uses calcium to neutralise the acid and often steals this from the bones. Try reducing the acid foods in your diet, the main ones being meat, wheat, dairy and shellfish. Increase the amount of alkaline foods such as fresh vegetables, especially the greens.

I mentioned vitamin K2 last month and this is found in natto (fermented soy beans), eggs, meat and cheese. Sadly the meat and cheese are acid foods.

So, in addition to needing vitamin K2 and vitamin D, magnesium is also necessary for activating vitamin D. Liquorice, coriander, dandelion, almonds, brown rice and green vegetables all contain magnesium.




FISH OIL

Many doctors prescribe warfarin to thin the blood but unfortunately warfarin inhibits vitamin K production, which can cause dangerous calcification in your blood vessels. A simple, natural blood-thinner is fish oil, which works by making blood platelets so slippery that they can't stick together to form a clot. As a bonus, the fish oil also helps build bone, prevents osteoporosis, prevents atherosclerotic plaque from building up, and improves cognitive function.

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POSTURES THAT FOCUS ON BONE STRENGTH

The instructions for doing yoga include actions that are opposite. You are often asked to press down and also to reach up. The goal is to create a stable and balanced pressure on the bones, which makes the postures safer and more effective. The benefits of yoga for osteoporosis come from the pull of muscle on bone. We need to engage a muscular strength that contracts and brings the different parts of the body toward the centre by pulling on the bones.

<p>ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA (downward dog) This posture stimulates the thigh and shin bones, the arms, wrists, shoulder blades and the vertebrae. Avoid rounding the back and keep moving the dorsal spine forward towards the sternum. If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, use the wall or a chair to support your arms and not the floor. Don't let the upper arms sag downward. Roll the inner arms upward toward the ceiling to maintain the proper rotation of the upper arms. Keep your knees bent if you are stiff, in order to tilt the pelvis and lengthen the spine.</p>	 <p>MARTY SCONDUTO</p>
<p>BHUVANGASANA (cobra) This posture stimulates the back of the entire spine, shoulder joints, arms and wrists. Keep your shoulders back and the sides of your body long. Don't overuse your arms. Keep your shoulders down and away from your ears. This posture is about expanding from the inside and supporting yourself with the muscles of your spine, more than the muscles in your arms. If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, keep your forearms on the mat and don't overstretch.</p>	 <p>MARTIN SCONDUTO</p>
<p>SETU BANDHASANA (bridge) This posture stimulates the back of the entire spine and strengthens the hips, shoulders, wrists, knees, ankles and elbows. The muscles in the back are strengthened. If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, place a blanket under your shoulders with your head on the mat. If you have osteoporosis place a block or blocks under your pelvis to support the weight of your lower body. If you have osteopenia prepare a belt by making a loop about 25cm wide. Lift your hips and chest and place the belt around your wrists. With palms facing each other, push out against the belt and press your arms onto the floor.</p>	 <p>DAVID MARTINEZ</p>
<p>JATHARA PARIVARTANASANA (supine twist) This posture can be practised with bent knees or straight legs. It strengthens the lumbar, thoracic and cervical vertebrae. It strengthens the thighs, shoulders and abdominal muscles. Maintain maximum length in your spine as you twist. Strongly press your shoulders down onto the floor to stabilise your upper body as your lower body turns. If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia hold a block between your lower legs and exhale as you turn to the side. Inhale back to the centre and exhale to the left. Continue moving from side to side with the breath.</p>	