**Unlocking Bone Health: A Comprehensive Guide to Managing Osteoporosis**

Osteoporosis, a prevalent condition characterised by weakened bones and increased fracture risk, calls for a multifaceted approach to healthcare.

In 2024, 6.2 million Australians aged over 50 are living with poor bone health costing our nation $4.8 billion annually (1). This is projected to almost double over the next decade due to our aging population

In this blog, we delve into the roles of various medical specialists who contribute to the comprehensive management of osteoporosis, highlighting the essential practices that can mitigate this widespread issue.

**The Important Role of General Practitioners**

Doctor’s/General Practitioners often serve as the initial point of contact in the healthcare system for individuals potentially suffering from osteoporosis, especially following incidents like low-trauma fractures. These primary care doctors not only conduct preliminary assessments such as bone density tests but also guide patients through the complex landscape of specialist care necessary for thorough treatment.

Most doctors are well-versed in the dosage requirements for osteoporosis medications and general nutrition but often lack detailed knowledge about the exercise needed to stimulate osteogenesis for bone growth, as well as the nuanced nutritional needs beyond standard recommended daily allowances which are now recognised as inadequate for older people. Although calcium and vitamin D supplements are commonly prescribed, the International Osteoporosis Federation highlights that these supplements are not beneficial for most people.

Research indicates that vitamin D can reduce fracture risks primarily in older, institutionalised individuals with very low bone density. For most people, it is now recommended to obtain calcium naturally from food sources and vitamin D from sunlight exposure and dietary sources such as eggs, mushrooms, and fatty fish.

**A stool with four legs and a diagram

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**Locating a knowledgeable doctor who comprehensively understands osteoporosis management, including the intricate interplay of bone and muscle health's **Four Pillars** and the potential impact of underlying medical conditions and medication interactions on bone health, is crucial.

**Four Pillars of Bone & Muscle Health**

**Specialist Care for Osteoporosis**

Osteoporosis management involves a range of specialists, each offering unique expertise:

1. **Radiographers and Imaging Specialists**: These professionals utilize advanced imaging technologies such as DEXA scans and HRpQCT to assess bone density and quality. Their work is vital in moving beyond basic diagnostics to a more nuanced understanding of an individual’s fracture risk.
2. **Endocrinologists**: Specializing in hormonal disorders, endocrinologists address the metabolic and hormonal aspects of osteoporosis, often managing treatments that directly affect bone density.
3. **Dieticians, Nutritionists, and Allergists**: Nutrition plays a pivotal role in bone health. These experts ensure that patients’ diets are rich in crucial nutrients that strengthen bone, while also managing conditions like celiac disease which can impair nutrient absorption.
4. **Orthopaedic Specialists**: In cases where osteoporosis leads to fractures, orthopaedic specialists are crucial for surgical intervention and managing recovery, often referring patients to physical therapy programs like OsteoStrong for rehabilitation.
5. **Podiatrists**: Focusing on lower extremity health, podiatrists play a key role in preventing falls - a common concern for those with osteoporosis.
6. **Rheumatologists, Gynaecologists, and More**: From managing chronic musculoskeletal conditions to addressing specific challenges faced by postmenopausal women, these specialists ensure comprehensive care that covers all aspects of bone health.

**Innovations in Treatment and Care**

Emerging technologies and therapeutic approaches, such as the OsteoStrong program, exemplify the innovative strategies being adopted to combat osteoporosis. These programs focus not just on slowing bone density loss but also on enhancing overall musculoskeletal strength, thereby reducing the risk of fractures.

In addition, new technologies like HRpQCT and radiation-free EchoLight scans using REMS enhance osteoporosis management by providing a comprehensive assessment of bone health and fracture risk through both qualitative and quantitative analysis, shifting focus from just Bone T-scores to a more integrated evaluation of multiple risk factors which are better at determining fracture risks.

**Global and Community Efforts**

Organizations like the International Osteoporosis Foundation, Healthy Bones Australia, OsteoStrong Australia and OsteoStrong International are at the forefront of global efforts to educate and provide resources on osteoporosis. Their work, alongside that of other specialist groups, underscores a concerted international effort to address and mitigate this condition.

**Summary**

The management of osteoporosis requires a collaborative approach among various healthcare providers. From initial detection by a GP to specialised care and innovative treatment programs like OsteoStrong, each element is crucial in providing patients with the best possible outcomes. As we advance, the integration of new research and technologies continues to enhance our ability to effectively manage osteoporosis, offering hope and improved quality of life for millions affected by this condition.

*\* \*For more information & resources read the full article here \*\**

**Perry Eckert**

**OsteoStrong Australia**

(1) Osteoporosis fractures in Australia. A burden of disease analysis 2023-2033, Healthy Bones Australia 2024, [bod-2024-digital-isbn-final.pdf](https://healthybonesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/bod-2024-digital-isbn-final.pdf)