Preventing Osteoporosis

Building strong bones during childhood and adolescence is your best defense against osteoporosis (porous bones) later in life. But it's never too late to make your bones healthier.

To help you prevent bone loss, you can exercise, eat a healthy diet, avoid excessive alcohol and smoking, limit caffeine consumption, and make certain you are getting enough calcium and vitamin D.

**Calcium** needs change during your lifetime. Peak demands are when you are young and building your skeleton, during pregnancy, and when breast-feeding. Your body becomes less efficient at absorbing calcium as you age, and medications can interfere with absorption, too.

Good sources of calcium: dairy products, broccoli (cooked or fresh), cooked kale, almonds, canned salmon with bones, orange juice with added calcium, and soy products like tofu.

**Vitamin D** helps your body take in calcium and may improve muscle strength as well. Sunlight is a great source. Two or three times a week, you will need 10 to 15 minutes of sunlight on the hands, arms, and face to absorb the necessary amount. (The time in the sun depends on your skin’s sensitivity to light, use of sunscreen, skin color, and pollution.)

Good sources of vitamin D: sardines, tuna, egg yolks, and dairy products. Pudding made from mix and vitamin D fortified milk is a yummy and healthy treat.

If getting enough of these nutrients through your foods is difficult, calcium and vitamin D-3 supplements may be the answer for you.

**May is Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month**

**Prayer:** God of Strength and Love, turn my face toward the sun. Let its healing warmth remind me of your power. Help me make healthy choices today. Amen.