

Orthopedic Health in Men and Women



why they aren't as at risk for osteoporosis as women. "Bone quality changes when women go into menopause," says Gregory McComis MD, from North Point Orthopaedics. "Estrogen and testosterone help to keep our bones health, but women lose their estrogen when they reach menopause. Women should take calcium and vitamin D to help with this bone loss."

But Dr. Hall says that men can have bone loss, too. "Two things can cause thinning of the bones in both sexes: cigarettes and alcohol," he says. "Bone is a living tissue, and we're always resorbing bone. But if we don't produce enough to replace the bone that's resorbed, that's when fractures occur."

Good Health for All Genders

Exercise is very important for orthopedic health, no matter your gender. Strengthening the muscles around the joint prevents injuries because muscles work by providing stability to the joint and protecting it from force. "In the lower extremities, every step you take you put about three times your body weight into that joint," says Dr. Hall. "When jogging, that number increases five to seven times. And if you're overweight the joint is taxed even further."

Dr. Hall says it's important for both genders to strengthen all the muscles around the joint, not just one. "It depends on the sport, but most important thing is to stretch first and then work muscles on the front and back of the joints."

Dr. Levenda recommends cross training because he says that focusing on one specific activity can develop problems. "For instance, if you're a runner, you can have knee problems," he says. "So mix it up; run, lift weights, bike. In this way you hit all elements of the body without stressing it. Weight training can include push-ups, pull-ups, bands, free weights. Yoga is great because it creates good balance, and it's a good core exercise. Most importantly, never stop exercising; you're never too old to work out. Physically you can always do something, and that will go a long way toward orthopedic health."

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Anterior hip replacements and the other medical treatments are available with Dr. Gregory McComis at North Point Orthopaedics. Call (219) 836-1060 or go online to www.nportho.net

Although no one is immune to orthopedic injuries, men and women differ when it comes to orthopedic health.

A Difference in Anatomy

Women tend to have more instability with the shoulders and kneecaps. "They are more loose jointed than men," says Anthony Levenda, MD, orthopedic surgeon from the Lakeshore Bone & Joint Institute. "The anatomy of a woman's pelvis has a different angle from hip to ankle, which causes the knee caps to shift outward a little. Women can have pain while kneeling, squatting, climbing stairs, and getting in and out of a low chair."

Injuries and Health Issues

Injury rate in men and women is also different. Martin Hall, MD, orthopedic surgeon at Keystone Orthopedic Specialist in Munster, Ind., says the thinking used to be that men had more knee injuries than women, but women are more active than they were twenty years ago. Females have an increased risk of tearing their anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), one of the four major ligaments in the knee. While it's a common injury in sports, female soccer players injure their ACL four times more than males do. "Once of the reasons for the tear is due to bone structure," says Dr. Levenda. "Women have a narrower notch where the ACL resides. So the ACL has less room, which increases the risk of tear. You can't fix structural anatomy, but keeping the legs strong and working the core muscles can help prevent injury."

Osteoporosis is more prevalent in women, in particular thin, light-skinned women, which puts them at risk for hip and wrist fractures. Bones are stronger in heavier individuals. Men are bigger, so that's one of the reasons