

[IMAGE]

Asthma Meds Increase Risk of Osteoporosis

By Editorial Staff

Osteoporosis can be a major health complication as we age. Brittle bones can lead to fractures, and fractures can limit activities of daily living, overall function ... and depending on the fracture site (e.g., the hip) and age at which it occurs (elderly), can even be fatal.

We've been told since we were kids that calcium and vitamin D are important for strong bones, which decreases osteoporosis risk, but no matter how strong your bones are because of diet, exercise or anything else, if you suffer from asthma and take asthma medication, you're doing your bones a disservice.

Here's why: Research links regular use of asthma steroid medication (inhaler or pill form) with osteoporosis or fragility fractures (caused by a fall from a standing height or lower), and the risk increases with use and use over time. Asthma patients who completed 2-3 tablet prescriptions within 12 months had a higher risk, with nine or more prescriptions elevating the risk fourfold compared to people who didn't take the pills. But inhaled steroids fared no better: Patients who completed 11 or more prescriptions were 60 percent more likely to suffer osteoporosis and more than 30 percent more likely to suffer a fragility fracture than non-users.

OK, so you suffer from asthma, but don't want to experience the side effects, including osteoporosis. What should you do? Writing about their findings in the *British Medical Journal*, the study authors suggest several options: "The use of [these drugs] should be kept to the minimum necessary to treat symptoms and should be stepped down if symptoms and exacerbations are well managed" and asthma patients should be educated on strategies to optimize their bone health and thus reduce osteoporosis / fracture risk.

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