

Steroid Treatment and Osteoporosis in Lung Disease

Steroid medicine is commonly used in the treatment and control of asthma and other lung disease. Taking steroids increases the risk of developing osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a disease of the bones.

Should I take steroids for my lung disease?

Yes! Steroids are the best treatment for "persistent" asthma and other lung disease. Asthma is an inflammatory disease of the air tubes in the lungs. Steroid medicine blocks the inflammation of asthma.

Steroids are often taken as pills or **inhaled** into the lungs. Inhaled steroids cause fewer side effects and **less** chance of osteoporosis than with oral steroids. Your doctor will use the lowest dose of steroids to control your lung disease. If oral steroids are needed, they will be given for the shortest amount of time possible.

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis, or porous bone, is a disease that results in the loss of bone mass and bone tissue. Porous bone leads to a greater risk of fractures of the hip, spine, and wrist because the bones may break more easily.

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Learn more about your health care.

Osteoporosis can strike at any age. One out of every two women over age 50 has a fracture from osteoporosis. By age 75, one third of all men will have osteoporosis.

About Osteoporosis

Your risk of osteoporosis is higher if you:

- Have a family member with osteoporosis
- Are Caucasian or Asian
- Have a low calcium intake
- Lack physical activity
- Smoke
- Drink alcohol
- Are thin
- Low estrogen from menopause or other illness
- Take certain medicines like steroids

Osteoporosis is called a silent disease because bone loss causes no symptoms at first. The first sign of osteoporosis may be a broken bone after a fall or bump.

Your doctor may order a DEXA Scan. A DEXA scan is a computer that takes pictures of your bones and measures how dense the bones are.

Medicines can be ordered by your doctor to treat osteoporosis. However, it is best to prevent osteoporosis before it occurs.

Preventing Osteoporosis

- Keep your **lung disease controlled**. Take your medicines as ordered and avoid triggers. This will reduce your need for oral steroids.
- Get enough **calcium** in your diet. Calcium is in dairy foods like milk, yogurt, or cheese. It is also in foods like tofu, collards, and sardines with bones. If you do not get enough calcium in the foods

you eat during the day, a calcium supplement may be needed. Talk to your doctor or nurse about taking calcium supplements.

- Get enough **vitamin D** in your diet. Vitamin D improves calcium absorption into the body. It is found in dairy foods, egg yolks, salt-water fish, cow liver and sunlight. If your diet does not contain enough vitamin D (400 units every day) in the foods you eat during the day, a vitamin D supplement may be needed.
 - **Exercise** 3 – 4 times a week for 30 minutes. Weight-bearing exercises such as walking, hiking, stair climbing and dancing are best to keep bones strong. Talk to your doctor or nurse before starting an exercise program if you have been inactive.
 - **Do not smoke or drink alcohol.** Smoking and alcohol speeds up bone loss.
 - **Hormone changes** in the body can speed up bone loss. There is some risk to taking hormone replacement. Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of these medicines.
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- **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**