Osteoporosis and Steroid Medicines

Although many people need to take steroid medicines for health problems, they can cause bone loss and osteoporosis (a disease that causes bones to become weak and brittle).

Steroids are much like certain hormones made by your own body. Health care providers prescribe them to relieve inflammation. Common steroid medicines are cortisone, dexamethasone (Decadron®), methylprednisolone (Medrol®) and prednisone. These should not be confused with anabolic steroids, which are male hormones that some athletes use to build muscle.

If you need to take steroid medicines for more than a few weeks, you should take steps to prevent bone loss. People of all ages can lose bone and even break bones if they take large doses of steroids for a long time. Taking steroid medicines as pills in a dose of 5 mg or more for three or more months can increase the chance of bone loss and developing osteoporosis.

While taking steroids, it is especially important to get enough calcium and vitamin D. It’s also important to exercise and not smoke. While steroid medicines increase your risk of getting osteoporosis, they can be a lifesaving treatment. Talk with your doctor about taking the lowest dose of steroid medicine for the shortest period of time for your condition.

Source: National Osteoporosis Foundation

Protect Yourself Against the Flu

Getting a seasonal flu vaccine every year is the best way to protect yourself against the flu. This year’s seasonal flu vaccine will protect you against three flu viruses, including H1N1 (also known as “swine” flu). You will not need to get a separate H1N1 vaccine this year. The flu vaccine is recommended for anyone 6 months of age and older.

Getting vaccinated is especially important for people at risk for serious flu complications and their close contacts. People at high risk include:

- Infants
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease, and those age 65 and older

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/flu or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4696).
MVP Health Care offers a condition health program for members living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). For more information or to see if you qualify, call 1-866-942-7966. MVP’s program is based on the Global Strategy for the Diagnosis Management (GOLD) and Prevention of COPD.

Take advantage of online resources to help you take charge of your health, available 24 hours a day on the MVP Web site at www.mvphealthcare.com!

Make informed decisions about your health with MVP’s online Health Encyclopedia

Want to know more about a medical procedure? Need more information to make an educated health decision? Curious about the medications you take every day? MVP Health Care’s online Health Encyclopedia (powered by the Healthwise® Knowledgebase) is your one-stop resource for the latest health information. You will find information to help you make simple decisions about whether to call a doctor and what self-care is best, and big decisions about medications, tests, and surgeries. You can research health questions that are important to you and your family on any of more than 6,000 health topics and find reliable, objective answers in our Health Encyclopedia. Go to www.mvphealthcare.com/member/live_healthy.html and click Health Topics (A-Z) in the Find Health Information section.

Calculate the risks and benefits of your health habits with our Interactive Health Tools & Calculators

If you think you may be ready to make a change in your health habits, or are looking for resources to help you explore healthy ideas that may be right for you, click on any of our interactive health tools and calculators for quick, personalized results! Are you ready to quit smoking? What is your stress level? How many calories do you burn during your workout? Click your way to the answers to these questions and more on the MVP Web site! Go to www.mvphealthcare.com/member/live_healthy.html and click Tools and Calculators in the Find Health Information section.

Enjoy Exclusive Member Discounts

As an MVP member, you can enjoy savings on a wide range of health and wellness products and services that can help you live well through our partnership with the ChooseHealthy™ Discount Network.

- Click the ChooseHealthy logo on the MVP Web site at www.mvphealthcare.com/member to visit the ChooseHealthy Web site and find a participating provider who offers a 25% discount on Chiropractic and Acupuncture Care, Massage Therapy or Dietetic Counseling
- The ChooseHealthy discount network also includes 15,000 fitness clubs and exercise centers at which you can get “best pricing” and a free trial offer
- You also can receive up to 40% off suggested retail pricing on dietary supplements and fitness products through the ChooseHealthy online store, plus free shipping on most items

ChooseHealthy is a discount product of American Specialty Health Networks, Inc. The program provides discounted complementary health care services from participating providers. You are required to pay for all services in full but will receive a discount from contracted providers. Check your health plan benefits before using this affinity program, as those benefits may result in lower cost to you than using this program.

Health Clicks

Living Well on the MVP Health Care Web Site

Take advantage of online resources to help you take charge of your health, available 24 hours a day on the MVP Web site at www.mvphealthcare.com!

Quick Tips when Talking with Your Doctor

Patients who have good relationships with their doctors tend to be more satisfied with their care and have better results. Here are some tips to help you and your doctor become partners in improving your health care.

- Write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered.
- Bring a “health history” list with you, and keep it up to date.
- Always bring any medicines you are taking, or a list of those medicines (include when and how often you take them) and what strength.
- You might want to bring someone along to help you ask questions and remember the answers.

Find more information and printable forms on the MVP Web site. Visit www.mvphealthcare.com/member/live_healthy.html and click Health Topics A-Z to go to our online health encyclopedia. Type “doctor” into the search box, then click on Making the Most of Your Appointment, Work Closely with Your Doctor, or Ask the Doctor Checklist.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) at www.ahrq.gov/consumer/quicktips/doctalk.htm

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