

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Losing Height Too Fast Spells Trouble

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

It has been known forever that as people age they lose some height. You didn't have to read this article to know that, right?

Do you know the reasons this happens? What if I told you losing height too fast is a warning sign?

It might be a good idea to keep reading. I saw a birthday card at a card store that said "If you think as you get older you get better, you must also think professional wrestling is real!"

It Is Natural

Some people start losing height slightly at age 30. In one study men lost 1.2 inches between 30 and 70 and 2 inches by age 80.

For you ladies the numbers are worse. Women lose 2 inches between age 30 and 70 and 3 inches by age 80.

Why?

You might think of a house settling on its foundation.

- Discs, the gel like shock absorbers between the vertebrae lose fluid and flatten. They contribute quite a bit to height.
- Muscles lose mass and weaken in the back and abdomen.
- Poor posture follows the above 2 statements.
- Foot arches flatten also reducing height a little.
- Vertebrae can compress even without injury secondary to osteoporosis.

What Makes It Worse?

Some things seem to definitely worsen height loss.

- Smoking
- Excess caffeine and alcohol
- Taking steroids
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Poor eating habits, deficient Calcium
- Lack of weight bearing exercise
- Genetics (you can choose your friends, but.....)

Big Concern

If the process is happening too fast the biggest concern is osteoporosis. As everyone knows, osteoporosis can lead to fractures.

Men and women then have a much greater risk of hip fractures. And hip fractures lead many to a loss of independence and higher death rate the first year after the hip fracture.

Too rapid height loss also goes hand in hand with heart disease and respiratory problems.

Lucky 20%

Not everyone loses height. About 20% of us don't shrink noticeably thanks to genetics and following healthy habits throughout their lives. You can't change your genetics and it's too late to change childhood and young adult eating habits.

For The Rest

Churchill said "Never ever give up". He wasn't referring to our topic, but it applies.

- Eat healthier
- More Calcium and Vitamin D
 If over 60, 2000 i.u. of Vitamin D per day. Calcium 1200 mg per day
- Keep exercising, for most of us walking 30 minutes a day as weight bearing exercise.
- Aerobic activity - supervised
- Weights with proper training
- Many medications to combat osteoporosis that your family doctor or internist can prescribe and supervise.

I hope you have learned something and will be motivated to not just accept and give up. Big mistake.

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It contains a world of musculoskeletal information you and your family and friends can use!

Website, Your Orthopaedic Connection, Archive of all previous Argus articles.

Please check it out. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush