Introduction and Kevin's Bone Health Journey

Hello, everyone. I'm Dr. Barbara Pickut, and I have the distinct pleasure today to welcome The Bone Coach, Kevin Ellis, known better as The Bone Coach.

he is an integrative health coach. And we're, again, very honored to have him today. speak to us about bone health in the context of Parkinson's. Kevin has a unique three step process and, fantastic coaching program called The Stronger Bone Solution.

Kevin, could you say a few words about your journey? I sure can, so. And thank you so much, Barbara. I'll start by saying this is such an important topic.

Parkinson's is such an important topic. It's close to me personally. My mother has Parkinson's and, you know, also just being in the bone health space and the osteoporosis space and helping a lot of people over the years build stronger bones.

I there is a connection and I know we're going to talk about that in a second, but, we'll start with just my even my own journey. most of the time you're not thinking about a younger male talking to you about your bone health.

You're thinking about maybe it's, your mother or grandparent, or maybe you specifically have osteoporosis. And there's a concern about fractures and injury.

And for me, I went down this path because I was diagnosed with osteoporosis right around 30 years old, and I was shocked. And a big reason for that was celiac disease and mal absorbing nutrients for many, many years.

And my body still needed the nutrients to execute its daily functions. I wasn't able to absorb nutrients, specifically calcium, and my body was going to the bones pulling from there.

It led to bone loss and osteoporosis right around 30, and all I wanted to do was be there for my kids and be a good father and be able to be active and pick them up and play with them and do all those things.

And I, I thought that was a question that was in question. So I went down the path of doing the research and the reading and not only getting a plan in place to improve my health and my bones, but then going on to help a lot of other people do that, too.

And, and as a, present day, we've got just over 250,000 people in our stronger bones community. And, we've had over 10,000 people come through our stronger bones programs, credentialed team of of top functional medicine practitioners, Harvard PhDs, exercise physiologist who specialize in bone health to specifically help people build stronger bones in these programs.

So it's become a real passion of mine. and I just I love seeing people start in the place of being frustrated and scared and overwhelmed and really get the education, the empowerment, the confidence to move forward. So.

So, Kevin, I'm interested. Could you tell us a little bit about the connection between Parkinson's and osteoporosis? I sure can, and there is a connection.

So if you're if you're listening to this, pay attention because, you know, as I've gone down this, this path of exploring the connection between Parkinson's and osteoporosis, Osis and bone health, it's really fascinating.

there are a couple reasons why, if you have Parkinson's or if you're a caregiver for someone who has Parkinson's, you should pay attention to the bones, because, Parkinson's can contribute to bone loss in a variety of different

ways and also could increase the risk of falling, which could lead to fractures.

So let's talk about the bone loss piece specifically.

Parkinson's, Osteoporosis, and Fall Risk

one of the one of the issues with Parkinson's is that there could be a nutrient absorption issue that comes up, one of one of the things there is a medication called, levodopa, right?

That that competes with other proteins in the digestive tract for absorption. So that's one proteins are the primary mineral constituent of your bones are one of them.

they're actually the foundational structure of it. So, what I would say is that I don't know if I, I touched on this, but your bones are a collagen protein matrix with important minerals like calcium and magnesium and all these other ones built in there.

So if we have issues with getting these nutrients in and absorbing them, that could then prevent us from having the foundational building blocks for that bone structure.

Okay. So that's one one potential contributing factor. Another one would be the dopaminergic degeneration that can take place. And so really important is that dopamine receptors are present on bone cells.

And a decrease in dopamine signaling, as we see in Parkinson's. That can negatively affect bone strength. And with dopamine dopaminergic degeneration what can happen is it can accelerate what's called as the class genesis, which is that's where it increases the activity of the cells that are breaking down bone.

And it can also suppress bone formation. So with bone, we have this delicate balance of bone resorption where we're scooping out this old damaged bone.

We can bone. And right behind it we have bone formation. These cells, called osteoblasts, come and build stronger, healthier new bone. This is a natural process that takes place throughout our lives and helps us build these stronger, healthier new bones.

But when we have something, like Parkinson's and this dopaminergic degeneration is taking place, that process of bone remodeling can become effected. Right?

And that could dampen bone formation, and it could actually increase, bone bone loss that's taking place. So that's another big one. And, then the falls.

So falls are one of the when someone has osteoporosis or issues with their bone health, falls are the the greatest contributing factor to fractures. Right.

And fractures can be you know there's I know there's a lot of fear for people around fractures. But I will say they don't have to be your fate. You know, just because you're getting older and you're having bone loss, it doesn't mean that you're going to fracture.

But we do need to be aware it is a very real possibility to. And fractures can be life changing. That can be debilitating. So we we just want to be aware that, balance is going to be really important, paying attention to the way you set up your environment and how you move through your environment can be really important to the kinds of shoes that you're wearing on your feet to.

Right? All those things kind of play, play into this. So we we just want to be aware that if we're having, situations where falls are possible, that's going to increase our risk of fracture.

So that's I would say those are the the biggest points, at least to start related to Parkinson's and osteoporosis.

Thank you for sharing that very important information for people.

we generally, when we see patients or people with Parkinson's in the clinic, we ask at every visit, have there been falls? And we know that the risk of falling, if one has Parkinson's is upward to 60 plus percent a year.

So it's a real issue and something that we definitely need to spend time on. So thank you very much for that. Yeah. So Kevin, let me ask you, I'm very interested in the background you gave about celiac.

And I have twin girls who have celiac. And at that time where I was living, there was not a gluten free aisle. And, so I bought a bread machine and made bread, which, fell apart in their school lunch boxes.

And, we did everything we could. We made it. But, can you tell us a little bit about your experience with that? I sure can, yeah. So if you have celiac disease, too.

So for those who aren't familiar, let's just touch on what is celiac disease, because, celiac disease is an autoimmune condition where when you ingest gluten.

Celiac Disease and Nutrient Absorption

So gluten being found in, wheat, barley, rye, any products that contain that. So your breads, cakes, cookies, crackers, pizzas, passes, all that kind of stuff.

and what can happen is when you ingest gluten, if you have celiac disease, there are these tiny little nutrient absorption centers in your small intestine called villi, and they're responsible for absorbing the nutrients from the food that you eat.

And what they'll do is they'll they'll take those nutrients and they'll shuttle them into your body, and those nutrients will go to where they're needed in your body to support better health and stronger bones.

But when you have celiac disease, those villi can become blunted. And what can happen is I would like in them to roots in your soil. So imagine yourself as a plant.

The roots in your soil are the villi and those. My roots effectively became damaged because I have celiac disease to. And if you're consuming gluten and you have celiac disease, your roots will become damaged.

They won't be as effective at absorbing those nutrients. And your body specifically calcium. Calcium is the primary mineral constituent of your bones.

You need it every single day for muscle contractions, for nerve impulses. And if you're not taking it in, consuming it, and you're not absorbing it, your body is still going to get that those minerals.

So where is it going to go? It's going to go right to the bones. It's going to not just selectively pluck out that calcium, it's going to tear down that whole bone matrix structure too.

So the protein, the minerals, the calcium that will come with it. So, you just have to be aware if you have longstanding chronic digestive issues, if you have celiac disease, those are risk factors for bone loss because of that nutrient absorption piece.

That's one big component of it. And I understand intimately the challenges with having celiac and going out to restaurants and all of that stuff. and I, I've come to a point where I don't feel deprived, actually, at all.

And I know that can be really hard, though, for someone when they're first starting out. And it just takes this, a mental reframe of, you know, accepting that the things, the things that you get to eat are still a blessing, too.

I mean, you can make this because you don't get to eat a gluten free pizza or a gluten free whatever doesn't mean

that you're you can't really enjoy food.

I mean, you can go and make, a great meal that includes none of those things that's healthy, that has whole foods in it. that's still really rewarding.

And there are plenty of places out there that have recipes, you know, that you can look up that are that are based around that too. So that are super. Thank you so much.

Thank you for educating our viewers. Yeah. Very important. and we're discovering it more and more. So yeah, that's that's thank you for sharing. Kevin Kent, may I ask you if someone finds out that they have osteoporosis?

What what should they be thinking? What can they do? What actions can they take. Yeah. So and let's let's start with the first step. And someone understanding if they have osteoporosis is normal.

You're you're going to go get what's called a bone density scan. If you haven't had one I would encourage you to get one because you can't address something that you don't know is there right.

And I would also encourage you don't avoid it just because you don't want to know what's there. That's not a good approach either. So, if you understand the state of your bones currently, you go get a bone density scan.

It's, And what the bone density scan is going to do is going to tell you if you have normal bone density, if you have what's what's called osteopenia, which is like a precursor to osteoporosis, or if you have osteoporosis and you'll get a score, the score helps you understand that.

And if you have osteoporosis, that is that means porous bones. Right. So there is a reduction in either, in bone quality, bone density, bone strength, all of those things have some kind of reduction and that just increases your fracture risk.

So what we want to do is figure out if that's present, and then take proactive steps to help you prevent fracture and injury.

What to Do After an Osteoporosis Diagnosis

Okay. So you you wouldn't just want to go off of just the bone density scan itself. That can tell you if you have osteoporosis. But the normal recommendation for most doctors, once someone is told they have osteoporosis is just take calcium, take vitamin D, go for a walk, don't lift anything heavy.

And here's this medication and we'll see you in two years for your next bone density scan. Okay, that is not enough. There is so much more that needs to be done.

And so the first place we need to start is we need to actually get some more objective information. We need to understand are we still actively losing bone right now?

Present day. Because a single Dexa scan, single bone scan, that's not going to tell you that unless you have multiple bone density scans over multiple periods of time, you need more than just those data points.

So I always encourage people to get what are called bone turnover markers, the CTCs and the P one NP, those are blood tests that look at the activity level of cells that are breaking down and building up bone.

And if that activity level is elevated, or even a really high, that can be an indicator of active bone loss and a root cause issue that needs to be addressed.

So serum CTCs, that is the most sensitive marker for bone resorption, P1 and P is the most sensitive marker for bone formation. So you can look those up.

Google. there are different sites that you can go to that actually have them. There's one called osteo IQ that you can go to that offers this as a service.

but you can find these things called bone turnover markers, and they will help you understand the state of your bones right now, present day. So now we've got some real time data which can be really helpful.

Then what we want to do is we want to understand, if there are any causes and contributors to that bone loss, if we have it. Right. So if we identify that, let's say your serum is really high and there's an indicator of active bone loss.

Now we need to figure out what's causing it. So then we'll go down the path of exploring different tests or possible contributing factors. And then we'll go target those things.

Right. And then we'll retest the CT to see if that comes down. Did were we able to bring bone resorption down. And now we're we're making these objective decisions and seeing meaningful improvements.

And these leading indicators, these markers that we can see early on okay. So that's kind of where we need to start is addressing underlying issues. Then we would get into the diet the digestion the absorption part okay.

So obviously you know you're learning a lot about diet and the digestion absorption on this summit and you're getting great nutrition tips there to a couple of really important parts of diet, digestion, absorption.

You want to have good healthy protein, consumption. So you want to make sure you're taking in enough protein. And I know that can be hard. You know, with someone who has Parkinson's, where, you know, you're trying to eat a big meal and you may have trouble swallowing, you know, some of the bigger foods, in those situations, maybe we consider adding in some protein shakes, too, right?

Where you're incorporating something like collagen peptides or, you're you could do a, depending on what plan you're following. You could do like some kind of isolate, you know, whether it's not everybody tolerates dairy but a whey protein, or you could do a beef protein isolate.

But these are ways to bump up that protein. So that you actually are getting some of these important minerals and nutrients you need for your bones. Okay.

And then we'll talk about the minerals. so in terms of minerals you have to have the protein structure for your bones. Then you got to have the minerals too.

One of my favorite foods that I love to see people incorporate if they can, if they like it, are sardines or mackerel or salmon with the bones in, in the can.

and you want to get, like a BPA free. Can you make sure the bones are in there and they're not hard bones that are going to hurt your mouth. they're really soft.

And the reason I like these is they have protein. They have omega threes, which are dampeners of inflammation. And they have, all the minerals in the right ratios that nature put them in.

Right there and one place. So, you can also to make those taste good. We have recipes over on our site for, for how to make sardines taste good. and at bone coach.com.

But, in terms of how you would do it for, the sardines in a can, you can take something like a primal kitchen dressing. It's an avocado oil based dressing and drizzle a little bit on there.

And that can actually make it taste really good. Okay. So I'm just giving some tactical tips here because sometimes we we stay a little too high level and people are like, how does this apply to my daily life.

And I think that can be really helpful. So and then one other important nutrient I want to talk about is vitamin C.

Okay. Vitamin C is very important for maintaining and developing a healthy skeleton.

And we all hear about it for a lot of other helpful things can be helpful for, Parkinson's immune system, you know, all these other health conditions we're talking about.

And it's specifically for your bones. Vitamin C stimulates pro collagen. It enhances collagen synthesis and stimulates something called alkaline phosphatase activity, which is a marker for bone building cell formation.

So this vitamin C can be really helpful. And you can get that from berries. You know, organic berries at the store if you can. If you can do that. Those are great additions.

so as from a nutrient perspective. And then let's shift to, the last, one of the last bigger buckets. There are other important things under there. But, just for the sake of time, we'll go to the last bucket, which would be build.

Right. So in build, what we do is we focus on stress reduction. Barbara, I know you and I were talking about this, right before the interview. We're talking about how important stress is in this whole picture of of, improving health conditions that you currently have, or even just creating good health, creating a foundation for good health. Yes.

So we want to make sure we're bringing that stress down. And sometimes people hear that and they're like, oh, well, I'll do the occasional sigh, you know, every now and again throughout the day.

But that's not enough. We need to we need to cultivate this with some intention, and we need to develop a practice, set aside some time, maybe even just five minutes, you know, and even if you're the person that says, oh, well, I don't do meditation, I my brain, I can't, you know, I can't focus.

I can't just sit still for that period of time. You'd be surprised when you lean into that and you put a little you just don't try to control too much.

there are some apps that can help you with with meditation, too. So, and then improving your sleep quality. Very important. And then exercise. And I know that well for exercise, I know for Parkinson's, the concern here is, you know, the impaired motor function and, movement and different areas.

And I'll just talk about some of the most important types of exercise to support your bones. But we can also do these in a way that's safe. It doesn't put us at risk of falls or injury too.

So we want to have weight bearing exercise and we want to have strength training and resistance exercise. So with weight bearing these are exercises where you're you're doing them on your feet, right?

Your body and your bones. They work against gravity to keep you upright. You're placing a good healthy stress on the bones. So this is where you've got walking and jogging and hiking and gardening, all those kinds of things.

Or it could be yoga, Pilates, tai chi, qigong.

Diet, Stress, Sleep, and Exercise for Stronger Bones

All of those are weight bearing too, right? So we can incorporate those. So we want to make sure we're doing those. We also want to incorporate strength training and resistance training.

Now if it's intimidating to you to you know, you probably aren't going to be loading up a big bar with a lot of weight, you know, and putting it on your back, especially if you've got Parkinson's too.

That may not be the right approach for you, but what we could do is we could make some adjustments and use resistance bands, variable resistance bands, much less much lower risk of injury.

When you use variable resistance bands, you don't have to stack big heavy weights on a bar, but you can still

provide a stimulus that's going to help you build muscle strength.

It's going to help you build bone strength, too. So, there are just there are ways to navigate these things, that is going to help you address multiple things at the same time in a safe way.

Yes. Thank you very much for that. I'm sure the our viewers have, a lot to take in. and I think a lot of, in a lot of ways our pathways are similar in that I had sardines for dinner last night.

I love. It, and I love it. There's so good. Big sardine fan. And yes, stress and Parkinson's is something that that I've been passionately interested in and teaching.

and you brought another dimension to it. also we, we know, and the literature shows that stress can increase symptoms and stress reduction techniques such as mindfulness, for example, even in those which we teach gently, even in those who feel like, I can't meditate, my mind is so busy, we learn to befriend the mind and to utilize the mind as an ally.

So that's one of the goals. So thank you so much for for sharing that, is there something in closing you wanted to still share with us today? Yeah. Well, I'll, I'll add a couple other things in there.

So I love arugula too. Yes. Me too. A great leafy green, same cruciferous family of vegetables as broccoli and kale. but what it what I like about arugula is it's a low oxalate green, and oxalate spinach.

Yeah. Yeah. Oxalates are an anti nutrient that can bind up bone healthy nutrients. spinach is very high in oxalates. Some people that have chronic digestive issues too.

Or if you've got a lot of joint pain or things like that, you may have issues with oxalate. So finding ways to reduce that can be can be helpful. So when you swap spinach for a rugelach you still get some leafy greens.

But that's a low oxalate version of it. So and a rule is just so easy you can drizzle with a little olive oil, and or. Raspberry vinegar. Or something like that. Yeah.

You know, and it's just an easy side salad. Or you can saute it in a pan with a little bit of oil or butter. So, that can be a great addition. Yeah, I really like that one.

And then, yeah. You know, if you would have told me when I used to be in the Marine Corps, and if you would have told me that meditation would be one of the most important practices in my life today.

You know, 15 years ago. 20 years ago, I wouldn't believe. Yeah. I, I used to say I could never do this right, but. I was one of those. Yes, I really was.

I and I've converted for sure. interesting. And I love it now. I couldn't, I couldn't see my life without it, so. And you don't it doesn't have to consume all your time.

Could just be five minutes even or even just even a minute or two of just doing some some very easy breathing exercises. so I just encourage you to, to explore that.

it's, if I can interject, it says it's a natural quality. It's a human quality to be mindful and mindful. The word mindful is used, often now in our common parlance.

But the quality, the the characteristic mindfulness, the property mindfulness is a human quality. And it's like learning to play an instrument. The relationship with the mind.

It's, it's practice and it doesn't have to be long. And some people get it quicker than others. For, and practicing together is fun. So thank you for sharing that.

And and there's. go ahead. I would just share there just two things I share with my own clients and people that come through our programs too, that I think are really good from a mindset perspective also because, how we view our circumstances and the position that we're in has such an important role in, you know, your future health, your outlook on life.

And just I always encourage people to approach things with curiosity instead of expectation. And when you do that, disappointment will disappear. So I know when we're going down the path of trying new things, exploring new things, there's discomfort there for a lot of people going into the new.

And sometimes we place a lot of expectations on, oh, this is going to be this supplement. This is going to be the food that does it all. This is going to be the extra and sometimes they don't work the first time or it's not the right thing for you.

And that's okay. Right. That's all. That's all part of this process. Getting it wrong is part of getting it right. So you just have to be be patient with yourself as you're on this journey.

And again, approach things with curiosity instead of expectation. And that disappointment is going to fade away. And the the last note that I would make would be to all you have to do is set the goal of where you want to be and remind yourself of why that's important to you. Why?

Why are you on this summit right now listening? Why are you taking notes? Right? Is it because you want to be here for your kids, your family, your grandparents, whoever it is long into the future?

Do you just want to have good quality of life without pain? you know, do you want to learn how to reverse the conditions that you've got? That's why you're here, right?

So hold that as what you want for your future. You don't have to know where every single step is placed. Day one. You just have to know where you want that path to lead and hold the vision for it.

And then just start making it. Start moving forward and making progress in that direction. All right. The rest of the steps will show themselves.

Mindset, Closing Advice, and Where to Find Kevin

So wonderful. Great advice. Thank you so much for being with us today. The truly a pleasure and an honor to speak with you. Of course. Thank you. So, Kevin, before we, and our conversation today, could you let our viewers know how they can find you?

Absolutely. And thank you so much. And, you know, for everybody listening, if you know you need help with building out a stronger bones plan, you can always find us at bonecoach.com.

and we've got lots of resources over there. We've got recipes on how to take those sardines and make them taste good. we've got stronger bones programs.

We've got a whole team of people over there to help you on the stronger bone side. but you can always find us a bone coach.com. You can also find us on a podcast that Barbara will be on, very soon, at some point in the future.

And, we will also you can find. That's The Bone Coach podcast, and then you can find us on all the social channels @BoneCoach or @BoneCoachKevin. But Bonecoach.com is the best place. So.

Wonderful. Kevin, thank you so much for being with us today and hope to see you soon. Thanks, Barbara. Bye bye. Everybody.