

Bone Health Merchandising & Marketing Tips – February 2008

By Debby Swoboda

May is National Osteoporosis Month, so “naturally” you want to do your part to help your customers learn how to build and maintain healthy bones. Your theme could be “Osteoporosis isn’t just your grandmother’s disease,” to quote U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona.

In 2004 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General issued the first-ever report on the nation’s bone health: *Bone Health and Osteoporosis: A Report of the Surgeon General*. The report carries a sobering warning: By 2020, half of all Americans over age 50 could be at risk for fractures from osteoporosis and low bone mass.

Here are some ideas for teaching about bone health in every area of your store.

1. Events:

- Contact the National Osteoporosis Foundation for press releases and Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month materials (see below).
- Include an acupuncture professional at your event—they can play an important role in identifying and treating those with risk of bone disease.
- Invite a Girl Scout troupe to visit your store so they can earn their health badges. Invite their mothers and give out samples and literature.
- Hold an exercise class to teach weight bearing and strengthening physical activities that can contribute to bone health and also improve balance, coordination, and muscle strength. Offer physical activities that require little or no equipment, such as walking, jumping rope, and hiking.
- Hold a cooking class: “Feed your bones”

2. Grocery Department:

Promote foods that are rich in calcium and vitamin D:

- Canned salmon with bones or canned sardines
- Fortified foods such as fruit juices, cereals, breads, and soy products
- Non-fat or low-fat dairy products such as milk, yogurt and cheese
- Orange juice with added calcium

Tips on Things to avoid: No sparkling drinks: these have phosphates, which pull calcium from the blood and the bones. Too much coffee, alcohol, red meat (or other high protein foods) can also affect your calcium supplies and bone strength. One more reason to avoid cigarettes, too!

3. Produce Department:

Eat a balanced diet with a variety of fruits and vegetables:

- Broccoli
- Leafy green vegetables
- Sesame seeds
- Soybeans
- Sunflower seeds

Set up a station to make smoothies with powders and supplements to support bones.

4. Supplement Department

Be sure to stock up on the following items, and provide information about how to make sure the calcium is assimilated by the body:

- Bone Health Formulas
- Boron
- Calcium
- Digestive Enzymes
- Manganese
- Magnesium
- Phosphorous
- Silica
- Vitamin D
- Zinc

5. Website:

Provide information and links to the sites listed below. Promote your special events.

6. Literature and education:

Education and Outreach: provide flyers with coupons in schools to teach young girls that it's not an elderly disease. Provide information on maintaining a healthy weight.

Order the Surgeon General's magazine, "People's Piece," which answers the most commonly asked questions about how to develop and maintain healthy bones, as well as posters: 1-866-718-BONE or www.surgeongeneral.gov

Marketing Tip: Create shelf talkers that state, "Support Bone Health." Place these signs throughout the store on items that offer healthy solutions. Create a flyer with a sample of the created shelf talker, and list your selected items encouraging interested shoppers to "shop the signs". Consider placing the flyers at the register, customer service counter, education/book department, on a "bone health" end cap, and even posting it on your web site.

7. Check-out Area

Distribute tip sheets on how to take precautions in the home: e.g., remove items you might trip on, wearing shoes with good support, installing handrails, or improving the lighting in your home. Sell light bulbs or other useful household items at checkout.

“We each have a role to play,” (in the fight against Osteoporosis) according to the Surgeon General. Surely, it won’t take any convincing for retailers to step up to the plate on this one—it’s a win/win event for everyone.

Until next time, here’s wishing you a great day!

Debby

Debby link picks of the month:

- 1) The National Osteoporosis Foundation website: www.nof.org
- 2) Powerful Bones. Powerful Girls: www.cdc.gov/powerfulbones/parents/index.html
- 3) National Institutes of Health: www.niams.nih.gov/bone

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