Life is a balancing act for Private Practice’s Amy Brenneman

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Actor Amy Brenneman’s healthy balancing act

Actor Amy Brenneman of ABC’s Private Practice fame is in fine form these days. The Emmy- and Golden Globe-nominated star has finally learned “how to be nicer to myself” and put herself first more often.

Juggling a hit TV show while raising two kids (daughter Charlotte is 10 and son Bodhi is 6) with husband of 16 years, film writer/director Brad Silberling, Brenneman struggles to fit everything into 24 hours a day. And to stay sane—physically and emotionally—while doing it.

“I’m lucky because I have help,” Brenneman, 47, admits. “I think that for working parents, a big dirty secret that no one wants to talk about is finding child care that you trust. But unless you can hand off your precious children in a safe way, you can’t find time [for work and other pursuits] or have a clear conscience.”

Taking Good Care

In an effort to better care for herself, Brenneman works with a nutritionist, Los Angeles-based Ashley Koff, RD, who made small but important changes to the star’s diet. She avoids raw foods (while physically sound)—while doing it.

“No Tiger Mom

She applies this newfound philosophy to parenting, too. If her son isn’t up for T-ball practice, for instance, Brenneman won’t force him to go.

“What I’m talking with other moms,” she says of his practices, “who were saying, ‘It’s important for him to follow through on a commitment.’ And I’m thinking, ‘Gosh, he’s 5.’ So I told him: ‘I don’t really care if you do T-ball. It doesn’t matter a lot.’”

When it comes to the “tiger mom” approach of pushing and over-scheduling children, Brenneman says, “I’m just not into it. I told Bodhi, ‘There are certain things we have to do. We have to go to school. We have to be kind to one another. What we’re not going to do is make you go [to practice].’

So, you take a minute to decide: ‘And he did. Then he went and really enjoyed it. I took the heat off around it—and decided to do that in my own life.’

As a career actress now closer to 50 than 40 who didn’t land in Hollywood until her mid-20s, Brenneman takes a remarkably measured approach to aging.

“I have the greatest husband in the world. I’m not out there dating. And my husband takes a really dim view of men and women…who’ve had too much work done. He makes me feel beautiful.”

Brenneman laughs again, something she does easily and often. With her life in balance, her health better than it’s been in years, and yet another hit series on her hands, what doesn’t she have to smile about?”

By Lauren Paige Kennedy

WebMD Contributing Writer

WebMD Interview Before She Hits the Private Practice Set to Do a Scene.

“Sergio, my makeup artist!” (Sergio is making up Brenneman’s face during her WebMD interview before she hits the Private Practice set to do a scene.) “He makes me so happy!”

“My children’s belly laughs—priceless!”

“Bloopers reels,” the actor adds, rather unexpectedly. “I was watching the Private Practice bloopers reel the other day, and they cracked me up. I love when people who are supposed to have it all together mess up.”

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Your smile
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Which foods keep your smile bright?

Is laughing really good for my health?

Studies have indeed found an association between laughter and positive health effects, including an increased heart rate, improved blood flow, dulled pain, and lowered blood sugar levels in people with diabetes. But the idea that laughter has long-lasting effects is probably false—at least it has not been proven to be true, says Robert Provine, PhD, professor of psychology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and author of Laughter: A Scientific Investigation.

“It’s unclear if laughter has more of a medicinal effect than saying ‘ha-ha,’ singing, yelling, or jumping up and down,” he says. Moreover, Provin adds, the health benefits connected to laughing may really be due to other factors. “The essential ingredient for laughter is another person, not a joke,” he says. It then follows, he explains, that any medicinal benefits assumed for laughter might be the result of its social context, “not of barking ha-ha… laughter is literally the sound of play.”

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Ask your doctor if BONIVA is right for you.

BONIVA is a prescription medicine used to treat or prevent osteoporosis in women after menopause. BONIVA helps increase bone mass and helps reduce the chance of having a spinal fracture (break). It is not known how long BONIVA works for the treatment and prevention of osteoporosis. You should see your doctor regularly to determine if BONIVA is still right for you.

Important Safety Information: You should not take BONIVA if you have certain problems with your esophagus (the tube that connects your mouth and stomach), low blood calcium, cannot sit or stand for at least 60 minutes, or are allergic to BONIVA or any of its ingredients.

BONIVA can cause serious side effects including problems with the esophagus, low blood calcium, bone, joint, or muscle pain; severe jaw bone problems; and unusual thigh bone fractures. Before starting BONIVA, tell your doctor if you have problems with swallowing, stomach or digestive problems, have low blood calcium, plan to have dental surgery or teeth removed, or have kidney problems.

Stop taking BONIVA and tell your doctor right away if you have pain or trouble swallowing, chest pain, or severe or continuing heartburn, as these may be signs of serious upper digestive problems. Call your doctor immediately if jaw problems or hip, groin, or thigh pain develops; or if you have symptoms of low blood calcium such as spasms, twitching, cramps in your muscles, or numbness or tingling in your fingers, toes, or around your mouth.

Follow the dosing instructions for once-monthly BONIVA carefully. The most common side effects are back pain, heartburn, stomach area pain, pain in your arms and legs, diarrhea, headache, muscle pain, and flu-like symptoms. You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA at www.fda.gov/medwatch or by calling 1-800-FDA-1088.

Talk to your doctor for more information or if you have questions about your treatment.

Please see Medication Guide for additional important safety information.

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• Tooth pain
• Ulcers in your mouth
• Watery eyes
• Weakness

BONIVA is a prescription medicine used to help prevent or slow progression of osteoporosis. It is also used to treat osteoporosis after a hip fracture (break) in postmenopausal women. You should use your doctor regularly to determine if BONIVA is still right for you. It is not known if BONIVA is safe and effective in children.

How should I take BONIVA? Do not take BONIVA if:

• Have problems with swallowing
• Have stomach or digestive problems

When you start BONIVA, be sure to talk to your doctor if you:

• Have problems with swallowing
• Have stomach or digestive problems

You can take BONIVA with or without food. Do not take BONIVA with milk and may harm your baby.

Taking medicine with food is an important part of how BONIVA works. Especially tell your doctor if you:

• Have been told you have trouble absorbing minerals in your stomach or intestines (malabsorption syndrome)
• Are pregnant, or plan to become pregnant

Some people who take BONIVA may develop severe jaw bone problems. You may report side effects. You may report side effects. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

What are the ingredients in BONIVA?

BONIVA contains:

• Active ingredient: ibandronate sodium
• Inactive ingredients: lactose monohydrate, calcium carbonate, microcrystalline cellulose, croscarmellose sodium, purified talc, titanium dioxide, colloidal silicon dioxide, and purified water.

Tell your doctor and dentist about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Some medicines may affect how BONIVA works. Especially tell your doctor if you:

• Take antacids
• Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant
• Are breastfeeding or plan to breast-feed
• Have high blood calcium levels
• Have low blood calcium before you start BONIVA
• Have had chest pain, shortness of breath, or other heart problems. Be sure to tell your doctor and pharmacist all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Some medicines may affect how BONIVA works. Especially tell your doctor if you:

• Take other prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements
• Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant
• Are breastfeeding or plan to breast-feed
• Have high blood calcium levels
• Have low blood calcium before you start BONIVA
• Have had chest pain, shortness of breath, or other heart problems

Tell your doctor right away if you have any of these side effects.

• Headache
• Pain in your arms and legs
• Stomach area (abdominal) pain
• Swelling and pain in your ears, eyes, nose, or mouth
• Tooth pain
• Ulcers in your mouth
• Watery eyes
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