

HEALTHY BONES



BOOST YOUR BONE HEALTH AT ANY AGE

Healthy bones are vital to our well-being, from providing support and protection to helping us stay mobile. It is therefore discouraging to read statistics like one in three women and one in five men will have an osteoporotic fracture during their lifetime. You're never too old (and certainly never too young) to improve your bone health.

Take some time to learn some strategies to take care of your bones – even if you have already been diagnosed with osteoporosis. Protecting your bones comes down to protecting your quality of life.

Bone remodelling

Our bones are constantly being broken down and rebuilt in a process called remodelling. As we age, remodelling starts to break down more bone than it puts back. This process is something you should be aware of in order to consciously take steps to keep your bones in healthy shape.

Osteoporosis

It's important to do what you can now to prevent too much bone loss from happening and to avoid osteoporosis, a bone disease characterized by low bone mass and deterioration of bone tissue.

It's hard to know if you have osteoporosis until you've had a fracture (broken bone) because there are no other obvious physical warnings. Unfortunately for many, a broken bone can have drastic consequences, from preventing you from standing or walking to stopping you from performing daily tasks, such as getting dressed. Close to 20 per cent of people with a hip fracture find themselves living in a long-term care facility, while 27 per cent go to rehabilitation care; 23 per cent of hip fractures result in death in less than a year, and 50 per cent of those who survive are left with a disability.

While this information may sound scary, use it as motivation to take action. There are things you can do to build up your bone strength before a fracture happens. Talk to your doctor to find out if you're at risk of getting osteoporosis and learn how a bone-healthy lifestyle can play a big role in maintaining a healthy life.

Preventing fractures

While women are more susceptible to osteoporosis than men, there are many factors that can increase your risk of getting this bone disease no matter who you are. If you've never thought about how you can keep your bones healthy, take some time to read on.

A balanced diet is a good place to start. Our bodies require calcium, vitamin D, protein, vitamins A, B, C and K, phosphorus and magnesium to maintain bone health. Consult *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* for advice on how much of each food group you should be eating.

Getting enough vitamin D may require taking a daily supplement of 400 IU if you are over the age of 50. Sun exposure on sunscreen-free skin produces vitamin D. However, from October to March in Canada, the sun is not strong enough to do so. Also, as skin ages, it loses its ability to produce vitamin D. Ask your doctor if a supplement is right for you.

Stay active to increase your bone strength and improve your balance. Begin with a simple walk around the block. Ideally, you should also try some resistance exercises to improve muscle mass and strengthen bone.

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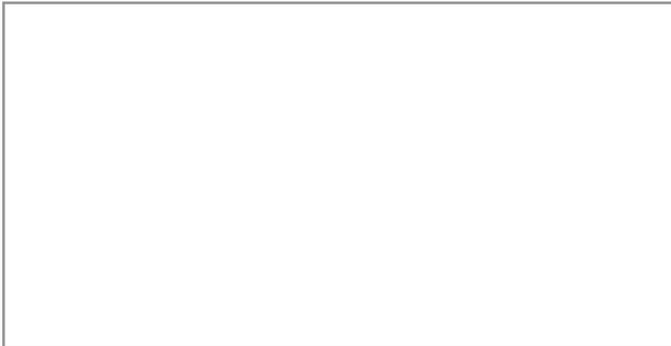
You should also find an activity you enjoy that will improve your balance and flexibility to reduce your risk of falling. Consider tai chi, swimming, yoga or gentle stretching exercises. If you already have osteoporosis, avoid activities that have a high risk of falling and that cause you to twist or bend. Being sedentary is not the answer! It leads to further loss of bone and muscle. Your doctor or physical therapist can help you design a safe and effective exercise program.

Make sure your surroundings aren't an accident waiting to happen. Some safety tips include:

- Use a nightlight
- Keep walkways clear of clutter
- Use a rubber bathmat in the shower or tub
- Ensure carpets and area rugs have skid-proof backing or are tacked to the floor
- Avoid walking in socks, stockings or floppy slippers

Avoid lifestyle habits that harm bones, such as smoking and alcohol abuse. When it comes to your bone health, there are certain factors, such as genetics, hormones and age, that you can't control. But you can help decrease bone loss by making good lifestyle choices. Take action now to improve your bone strength and prevent further bone loss. ●

Solutions



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