

BOOST YOUR BONE HEALTH

Maintaining healthy bones requires a combination of regular physical activity and a nutrient-rich diet.

Did you know that bones are constantly being broken down and renewed across our lives? Just like muscles, they're living tissue that needs the right nutrients and exercise to stay strong. And, while bone density also naturally decreases with age, there are lifestyle choices that can slow the process. Calcium, vitamin D, and regular physical activity are all super important for building healthy bones and preventing conditions like osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis literally means 'bones with holes'. The condition occurs when bones lose minerals, like calcium, faster than the body can replace them. It results in bones that are less dense and, therefore, strong, causing them to break more easily. The good news is diet, adequate vitamin D, and weight-bearing exercise can help prevent osteoporosis.

Whatever your age, you can build better bones with these exercise and nutrition tips.



Exercise for bone health

For adults, weight-bearing and resistance exercises maintain bone strength and help reduce bone loss that occurs with older age. Balance, strength and flexibility exercises help prevent falls and injuries that damage bones.

Weight-bearing exercises

Examples: Walking, running, dancing, hiking and stair climbing.

Benefits: These exercises force you to work against gravity, stimulating bone formation and slowing bone loss.

Resistance training

Examples: Lifting weights, using resistance bands, and using your own body weight to do exercises like push-ups and squats. Also includes everyday activities like carrying heavy shopping bags or gardening chores like digging

Benefits: Resistance exercises strengthen muscles and bones by applying stress that promotes bone growth and density.

Balance and flexibility exercises

Examples: Yoga, tai chi, and pilates.

Benefits: These activities improve coordination and balance, reducing the risk of falls and related fractures.

Recommended amount of strength exercise for adults

According to the Australian Physical Activity Guidelines, adults aged 18 to 64 should include muscle-strengthening activities on at least two days each week.



Diet for bone health

Eating a balanced diet packed with essential nutrients is key to keeping your bones strong and healthy. There are some nutrients that are particularly important:

Calcium

Sources: Dairy products (like milk, cheese, yoghurt), seafood, leafy-green vegetables, nuts, tofu, and calcium-fortified foods.

Benefits: Essential for bone formation and maintenance.

Know your calcium source

Dairy (and some dairy alternatives like soymilk) offer our highest food sources of calcium. An average serve of dairy contains 150–305 mg of calcium whereas an average serve of leafy-green vegetables contains 59–250 mg of calcium in a serve. The daily amount of calcium that is needed depends on your age and gender. Women aged 19–50 and men 19–70 need 1000 mg of calcium every day, and that increases to 1300 mg for women over 50 and men over 70.

Vitamin D

Sources: Sunlight exposure, fatty fish, fortified dairy, and supplements.

Benefits: Enhances calcium absorption needed for bone health.

Protein

Sources: Lean meats, dairy, legumes, and nuts.

Benefits: Important for bone structure and repair.



Start your journey to stronger bones today by incorporating these exercises and nutrition tips into your daily routine. Your bones will thank you.

If you already have a diagnosis of osteoporosis, your doctor should advise you on appropriate exercise and diet.

If you have any concerns or questions about your health before undertaking any physical activity, please consult with a physician or health-care professional first.

Sources

Better Health Channel, *Osteoporosis*, Victoria Government, accessed 9 August 2024 (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/ConditionsAndTreatments/osteoporosis).

Healthy Bones Australia, accessed 9 August 2024 (<https://healthybonesaustralia.org.au/your-bone-health/>)

Better Health Channel, *Calcium*, Victoria Government, accessed 9 August 2024 (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/calcium).

RACGP, *Calcium, protein and Vitamin D*, accessed 9 August 2024 (www.racgp.org.au/clinical-resources/clinical-guidelines/key-racgp-guidelines/view-all-racgp-guidelines/osteoporosis/general-bone-health-maintenance/calcium-protein-and-vitamin-d)

