

National Osteoporosis Month

Keeping Bones Strong and Healthy Let's Talk about Osteoporosis

Our bones are alive. We might not think of them that way—but to keep themselves strong and usable, our bones are always changing. “Bone is living, growing tissue,” says Dr. Joan McGowan, a scientist at The National Institutes of Health. “It’s constantly breaking down and building up. It keeps refreshing itself.”

But as you get older, your bones may be at increased risk for osteoporosis, when the bones become weak, fragile and more likely to break. And once they break, they take longer to heal. This can be both painful and expensive. Current estimates suggest that around 10 million people in the U.S. have osteoporosis, and 34 million more have low bone mass, which places them at increased risk.

Osteoporosis is a “silent” disease. You may not realize you have it until a sudden strain, twist or fall causes a broken bone (also called a “fracture”). With osteoporosis, even a minor tumble can be serious, requiring surgery and hospitalization. If you have osteoporosis, you can get a broken bone even though you haven’t fallen—by shoveling snow, for example. A spinal fracture, a break in one of the small bones in your back, may be subtle and go unnoticed. Or it may cause back pain, which you shouldn’t ignore.

“A large part of osteoporosis and fracture risk is inherited,” says McGowan. “If close relatives have suffered a fracture in their later years, this may be a clue to think carefully about your own risk. But diet and physical activity are major ways to build and maintain the best possible skeleton.”

Start with a well-balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D. Most of our bone is made of a rigid protein framework. Calcium (a mineral) adds strength and hardens that framework. Vitamin D helps the intestine absorb calcium. Calcium is found in many foods, but the most common source for Americans is milk and other dairy products. Your body makes vitamin D in the skin when you’re out in the sun. Some people get all they need from sunlight, but others need to take vitamin D pills. Physical activity is also important for building bone. The more work bones do, the stronger they get. That’s why it’s so important for kids to run and play.

But no matter what your age, McGowan says, “It’s never too late to promote bone health.” So ask your doctor about osteoporosis. And don’t forget to mention the medications you’re taking that might increase your risk.

Source: *NIH News in Health*

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<http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2010/February/feature1.htm>

The Bone Density Test

Some women are at greater risk for osteoporosis—the decrease of bone mass and density as a result of the depletion of bone calcium and protein—than others. Your doctor can help you determine your risk of developing osteoporosis by taking your personal and family medical history, and by performing a bone density test or bone mass measurement.

What is a bone density test?

A bone density test, also known as bone mass measurement or bone mineral density test, measures the strength and density of your bones as you approach menopause and, when the test is repeated sometime later, can help determine how quickly you are losing bone mass and density. These tests are painless, noninvasive, and safe. They compare your bone density with standards for what is expected in someone of your age, gender, and size, and to the optimal peak bone density of a healthy young adult of the same gender. Bone density testing can help to:

- Detect low bone density before a fracture occurs.
- Confirm a diagnosis of osteoporosis if you have already fractured a bone.
- Predict your chances of fracturing in the future.
- Determine your rate of bone loss and/or monitor the effects of treatment if the test is conducted at intervals of a year or more.

What are some reasons for having a bone density test?

If you have one or more of the following risk factors for osteoporosis, you may want to consider having a bone density test:

- You have already experienced a bone fracture that may be the result of thinning bones.
- Your mother, grandmother, or another close relative had osteoporosis or bone fractures.
- Over a long period of time, you have taken medication that accelerates bone loss, such as corticosteroids for treating rheumatoid arthritis or other conditions, or some anti-seizure medications.
- You have low body weight, a slight build, or a light complexion.
- You have a history of cigarette smoking or heavy drinking.

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Osteoporosis: Evaluate Your Risk

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes rapid thinning of bones. Over time, this weakens the bones and can make them more likely to break. About 10 million Americans have osteoporosis, and 80 percent of them are women, the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF) says. About 34 million more have below-normal bone density that hasn't reached the level of osteoporosis. Women are more likely than men to develop osteoporosis, in part because men have larger, stronger bones.

Both men and women older than age 50 are at the greatest risk for developing osteoporosis. One in two women and one in four men in this age group will fracture a bone because of osteoporosis. Ethnic group also plays a role: people who are white or Asian are more likely to develop osteoporosis than people who are Hispanic or African-American. Besides older age and ethnic background, these are risks factors that may increase your chances for developing osteoporosis:

- Small bone structure
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Previous fracture, especially after age 50
- Being postmenopausal
- Anorexia nervosa
- Cigarette smoking and alcohol abuse
- Not getting an adequate amount of calcium and vitamin D
- Sedentary lifestyle & certain medications

If your health care provider suspects that you have osteoporosis, a simple, painless test to measure bone mineral density can confirm it. The test is called bone densitometry or bone density test. If you're diagnosed with osteoporosis, a number of medications are available to treat it.

The following will help prevent osteoporosis:

- Do regular weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, dancing, jogging, stair-climbing, playing racquet sports, and hiking. If you've been sedentary, be sure to check with your health care provider before beginning any exercise program.
- Take calcium and vitamin D. People older than age 50 should get 1,200 mg of calcium per day. Fortified dairy products, egg yolks, saltwater fish, and liver are high in the vitamin.
- Don't smoke
- Don't drink alcohol in excess

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Bone Health Tips and Websites

Research shows that there are several ways to take care of your bone health:

- Get enough calcium and vitamin D in your diet at every age.
- Be physically active.
- Reduce hazards in your home that could increase your risk of falling.
- Talk with your doctor about medicines you are taking that could increase your risk for osteoporosis.
- If you are over 50 and break a bone, ask your doctor to screen you for osteoporosis.

Some websites on bone health include:

NIH Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases ~ National Resource Center

http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Bone/

For Seniors: Bones and Joints

<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/category/bonesandjoints.html>

For Kids: Best Bones Forever!

<http://bestbonesforever.gov/>

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Healthy Recipe: Turkey Pinwheels

This fun-to-make snack will become a family favorite

Ingredients:

- 4 slices whole-wheat bread
- 1 Tbsp light mayonnaise
- 1 Tbsp deli mustard
- ½ C cucumber, peeled and thinly sliced
- ¼ C jarred roasted red peppers
- 2 oz low-sodium deli turkey breast

Instructions:

Remove the crusts from the bread and flatten each slice with a rolling pin. Combine mayonnaise and mustard. Spread about ½ tablespoon on each bread slice. Arrange cucumbers and red peppers evenly on each slice of bread, and top with ½ ounce turkey. Roll each slice into a log, and cut each log into four pieces with a sharp knife. Serve immediately, or refrigerate logs until ready to serve (cut prior to serving).

Serving Size: 4 pieces **Yields:** 4 servings.

Nutrition/Amount Per Serving

Calories 106	Total Fat 2g	Cholesterol 11mg
Sodium 275 mg	Carbs. 12 g	Fiber 2g
Protein 7g		

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
<http://hp2010.nhlbi.nih.net/healthyating/recipe/detail.aspx?linkId=12&cId=10&rId=162>