



How to build and maintain strong bones

Osteoporosis, a disease that causes bones to become weakened and brittle over time, affects millions of people across the globe. The International Osteoporosis Foundation says an osteoporosis-related fracture occurs roughly once every 3 seconds, accounting for more than 8.9 million fractures a year. Younger individuals typically heal from fractures more quickly than older adults, who often discover that fractures greatly impede their mobility and quality of life. Bone health is important at any age, but it is particularly crucial as a person gets older. Without a strong framework of bones, the body collapses on itself and rates of fracture increase. Fortunately, there are several ways to keep and maintain

strong bones. Bones are largely made up of a protein called collagen, which is bound together by calcium and other trace minerals. Vitamin D and calcium work in concert, with vitamin D helping the body to absorb calcium so it can find its way into bones. Experts advise getting the right ratio of calcium, protein and vitamin D to safeguard against osteoporosis. The Institute of Medicine suggests that adults get between 600 and 800 international units (IUs) of vitamin D every day, and between 1,000 and 1,300 milligrams of calcium daily. Dairy products, such as low-and nonfat milk, yogurt and cheese, are high in calcium. Dark green vegetables and almonds contain calcium in

smaller amounts. Obtaining calcium and vitamin D through natural sources is always preferable, but doctors may suggest supplementation if foods are not providing what a person needs to meet the minimum recommended levels. Exercise is another important component of building strong bones. The National Osteoporosis Foundation says 30 minutes of exercise each day can help. Higher-intensity exercises should be mixed with lower-intensity workouts for the best results. Weight-bearing exercises, such as hiking, dancing and stair-climbing, can build between 1 and 3 percent of bone. An exercise regimen also should include lifting weights or using resistance bands.



Activities that promote good posture and flexibility can help improve balance and alignment of the body. Perform stretches smoothly and slowly after exercising to maintain your range of motion.

Quitting smoking also can promote strong bones. Smoking has been linked to poor skeletal health in both men and women, and the longer one smokes, the greater one's risk for fracture.

Elderly especially susceptible to the heat

Many people might choose a nice, hot day over a blustery, cold afternoon. However, excessively hot days can not only feel uncomfortable, but they can also prove life-threatening. Elderly men and women, in particular, are susceptible to the effects of hot temperatures.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people ages 65 and older are more prone to heat stroke and heat-related stress than those of other ages.

Seniors' bodies are not able to adjust to sudden changes in temperature as quickly as younger people's. A chronic condition that affects the body's response to heat, as well as taking certain prescription medications also may play a role in seniors' susceptibility to the heat.

The City of Sacramento Department of Parks and Recreation says that around 370 deaths from heat-related illnesses occur across the United States each year. Nearly half of those deaths are people who are 65 and older. Prolonged heat exposure can take quite a toll on the average person. Factor in the more delicate health of many seniors, and the hot weather can be quite dangerous. Further compounding the problem is higher energy costs. Seniors living on fixed incomes may not be able to afford to turn on air conditioners because of the power draw.

There are different types of heat-

related injuries, though heat exhaustion and heat stroke are the most common. Here are signs that a person may be experiencing one or the other.

Heat Exhaustion

- weakness • tiredness
- heavy sweating • paleness
- dizziness • nausea • vomiting
- fainting • fast, weak pulse rate
- headache • fast and shallow breathing

Heat stroke

- extremely high body temperature (over 105 F)
- red, hot and dry skin • absence of sweat • throbbing headache
- dizziness • nausea

What to do

Friends or family members should check in with an elderly relative or friend when the weather is especially warm to ensure they're safely handling the heat.

In addition, people of all ages can take the following precautions to keep cool when the temperatures

rise.

- Drink cool, nonalcoholic beverages. Water and diluted fruit juices can help rehydrate the body quickly.
- Restrict physical activity.
- Take a cool shower or bath or wipe yourself down with a damp cloth.
- Seek an air-conditioned environment. For those who won't or can't turn on the air conditioning, visit a shopping mall or library to keep cool. Some towns and cities also make cooling centers available in extreme heat.
- Wear lightweight clothing.
- Try to remain indoors during the hottest hours of the day.
- Wear hats or use an umbrella to shield your head from sunshine outdoors.
- Eat cool foods, but avoid extremely cold foods. Otherwise you risk the chance of developing stomach cramps.
- Do not do laundry or turn on appliances that contribute to extra indoor heat.

The heat is nothing to take lightly, especially when it comes to seniors' health.

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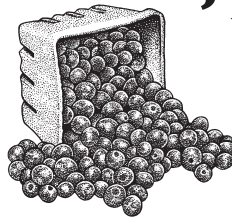
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