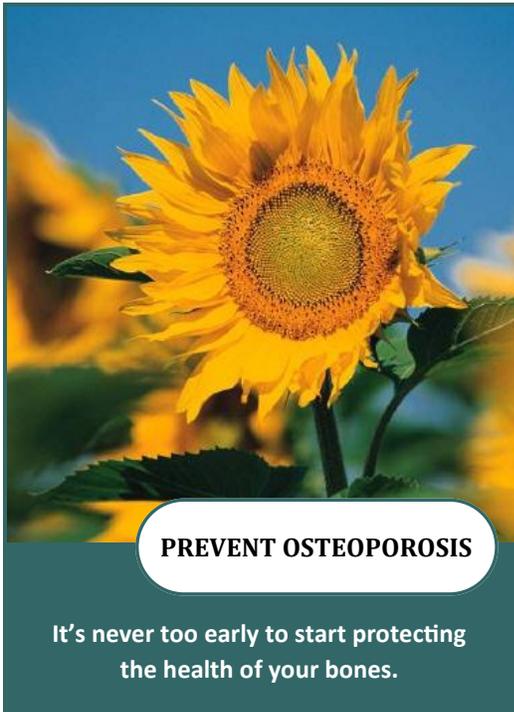


Starting Young With Your Health

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It is women look after their health when they are young, to cut the risk of suffering major medical conditions when they are older. This is particularly the case with their bones, it is essential they build up strong bones when they are young to prevent suffering later in life from weak, brittle bones—osteoporosis.



PREVENT OSTEOPOROSIS

It's never too early to start protecting
the health of your bones.

A staggering one in two women over the age of 50 in the UK will break, fracture, a bone mainly due to thinning bones. It is important to take care of our bones throughout our life and keep them healthy to avoid prevent osteoporosis later in life. Throughout our lives bone is constantly renewed. Bone tissue breaks down and fresh new bone tissue forms. The rate at which new bone is strengthened changes throughout our life. Bone strength deteriorates as we get older when the body is less able to replace worn-out bone with healthy dense new bone.

In childhood new bone is laid down faster than new bone is taken up. During this period of rapid bone growth, it takes the skeleton just two years to completely renew itself. In adults the process takes seven to ten years. The essential nutrient for good bone health, which gives them their strength and rigidity, is calcium, the best source of which are dairy foods. Dairy foods are the main source of calcium, but also green leafy vegetables, soya bean products and bread are good sources. The suggested daily intake increases as we get older. Our bodies contain about 1 Kg of calcium, 99 per cent of which is found in our bones and teeth.

Calcium alone will not build strong bones. Vitamin D is vital to help the body absorb calcium. The main source is the sun. Vitamin D helps the intestine absorb calcium and pushes the calcium into the bone. In addition you also need to eat a healthy well-balanced diet including five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day which contain vitamin C, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, zinc and sodium, all important for healthy bones.

When you're young you will be getting enough calcium from a healthy well-balanced diet, and most of us will get enough vitamin D from the sun, about half an hour a day, over the summer months to build strong bones. Exercise plays a crucial role in building up strong bones. Weight-bearing exercise such as jogging or aerobics, which increases the mineral content of the skeleton by stimulating the bone to grow, also plays a crucial role.

Alcohol can be bad for the bones if you drink more than the recommended 2 to 3 units. The toxins from the alcohol will prevent bones from absorbing the maximum nutrients from food. Smoking also lowers bone density, as nicotine affects the calcium content in bones.

There are simple steps that everyone can follow to optimize bone health in every decade of life, from birth onwards. Research suggests that dieting as a teenager could put bones at risk. Teenagers could endanger their developing skeleton and put them at increased risk of osteoporosis in later life if they fail to eat enough dairy products. Also gymnastics, hockey and skipping helps to build strong bone. Throughout our twenties our bones are still growing; new bone is added to the skeleton faster than old bone tissue is removed. You need to reach your maximum peak bone mass during these bone-building years then the stronger you will be to suffer bone loss through ageing. Building bone when you can is similar to protecting your possessions for the future with content insurance.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Exercise, Vitamin D,
Calcium and Sunlight can
all improve your bone
density.**

Women who exercise at least three times a week have a higher bone density than those who are sedentary. By our mid-thirties we begin to lose bone as part of the natural ageing process. It is important at this age that we have a lot of bone in our skeleton, therefore our lifestyle before we get to this stage will have been essential to maintain healthy bones.

Bone loss at this age is not rapid so it can be stabilized by having calcium, vitamin D through sunlight and taking regular exercise. In our forties our bones continue to weaken so more calcium is required. Taking up yoga or pilates which are more gently exercises can help with balance to stop falls.

In your fifties bone loss speeds up, mainly due to dramatic hormonal changes. After the menopause the ovaries stop producing the hormone estrogen. Estrogen stimulates the growth of bone cells called osteoblasts, which help to build bone. Because levels of the hormone fall rapidly after the menopause, the rate at which new bone is formed falls as well. As a result bones become thinner and more fragile.

In our sixties bone loss is more rapid and can't be prevented by diet and exercise. Fractures start to occur if you're not careful. Minimize the amount of bone loss by making sure you get enough of the essential nutrients calcium and vitamin D.