



NEWS RELEASE

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Exercise for Your Bone Health

May is *Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month*. Are you at risk? Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones become weak and are more likely to break. Eight million American women and 2 million American men have osteoporosis. Millions more have low bone density, placing them at increased risk for developing the disease as they grow older. The good news is that osteoporosis can be prevented. If you take preventive measures now, you won't have to worry about it as you grow older.

Exercise is an important part of an osteoporosis prevention or treatment program. Not only will exercise improve your bone health, but it increases muscle strength, coordination, balance, and leads to better overall health.

Why Exercise?

Like muscle, bone is living tissue that responds to exercise by becoming stronger. Young women and men who exercise regularly generally achieve greater peak bone mass (maximum bone density and strength) than those who do not. We have until between ages 25 and 35 to reach peak bone mass. After that time, we begin to lose bone. Women and men older than age 35 can slow bone loss with regular exercise.

The Best Bone Building Exercise

The best exercise for your bones is weight-bearing exercise. This is exercise that forces you to work against gravity, such as walking, hiking, jogging, stair-climbing, tennis, and dancing. Some examples of non-weight-bearing exercises are swimming and bicycling. In addition, these exercises, as well as many weight-bearing exercises, have excellent cardiovascular benefits.

Exercise Tips

If you have health problems, such as heart trouble, high blood pressure, diabetes, or obesity, or if you are over age 40, check with your doctor before you begin a regular exercise program.

Listen to your body. When starting an exercise routine, you may have some muscle soreness and discomfort at the beginning, but this should not be painful, or last more than 48 hours. If it does, you may be working too hard and need to ease up. STOP exercising if you have any chest pain or discomfort, and see your doctor before your next exercise session.

If you have osteoporosis, it is important that you consult with your doctor to learn which activities are safe for you. If you have low bone mass, you probably should avoid high impact exercise in order to lower the risk of breaking a bone. You might also want to consult with an exercise specialist to learn the proper progression of activity, how to stretch and strengthen muscles safely, and to correct poor posture habits. An exercise specialist should have a degree in exercise physiology, physical education, physical therapy, or a similar specialty. Be sure to ask them if they are familiar with the special needs of patients with osteoporosis.

Source: National Osteoporosis Foundation