



March 2008

YOUth Health

Bulletin



Keeping Your Bones Healthy



Have you heard the saying “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”? When we are talking about our bones that saying means it is better to take care of your bones when you are young. Taking care of your bones now will prevent bone health problems when you get older. Almost half of your bone strength is developed during your teenage years so it is really important to make “deposits” of calcium into your “bone bank” now.

The three ways to make and keep your bones strong and healthy are:

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Eat foods high in calcium.
- Participate in weight-bearing physical activity such as walking.

Eating a healthy diet means eating a variety of foods including fruits, vegetables and whole grains. If you have questions about what you should eat ask an adult you trust, your parents, school nurse, teacher or doctor.

It is especially important that you eat foods high in calcium and vitamin D. Calcium is a mineral that is in dairy foods and dark green vegetables. Your body needs calcium to make strong, healthy bones. Vitamin D is in milk, cereals, egg yolks, saltwater fish, and liver. We also get vitamin D from being outdoors in the sunlight.



The best food sources of calcium are milk and milk products, cheese, sardines, soybeans, peanuts, dried beans and green, leafy vegetables such as broccoli, kale and collard greens. Children 9-18 years old need around 1300 mg of calcium daily. You can tell how much calcium you are eating by reading the labels of food you are eating. Also, learn to read food labels. Food labels contain information about vitamins, minerals, calories, fat, and carbohydrates that are in the foods you eat.



Weight-bearing physical activity is any activity in which you are on your feet or even your hands and push against the earth, such as when you walk or run. Pushing against or hitting the earth sends a message to your bones that they need to make more bone and that makes bones grown stronger. Weight bearing activities are: running, walking, jumping, dancing and soccer. Other physical activities that are good exercise but are not weight-bearing are: swimming and riding a bike.

You should get at least an hour of physical activity every day. Make sure you have a check-up by your doctor before beginning any physical activity program. You may also get recommendations from your doctor on the type of physical activity that is best for you.



Following these healthy bone tips will keep your bones strong throughout your lifetime. Teach these bone health tips to your parents and other family members to keep their bones healthy too. For bone health games, screensavers, and a journal visit The National Bone Health Campaign, Powerful Girls Have Powerful Bones at <http://www.cdc.gov/powerfulbones/boneup/links.html>.

Sources:

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The March 2008 YOUTH Health Bulletin prepared by:

Angela Lang, RN, MSN Student UK
CON

Peggy Riley, RN, MSN, Extension
Health Specialist

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