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7 Tips to Help Keep Your Bones Strong

It's never too early or too late to be thinking about your bones! Find out what happens to your bones as you age and how to keep them strong.

What happens to my bones as I age?

In childhood and adolescence, most of our bone growth and bone density occurs. Girls reach their maximum bone density by age 18. For boys, this occurs by age 20. In adulthood, it is important to maintain bone density and try to slow the rate of bone loss. As we grow older, our bodies lose bone density. After menopause, women are especially at risk for osteoporosis.

How can I keep my bones strong?

Try these seven tips!

1. Choose calcium-rich foods to keep your bones strong

Calcium is the building-block of bones. You can find calcium in foods like:

- Milk
- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Kefir
- Fortified plant-based beverages, like fortified soy beverage
- Beans, tofu, nuts, fish and leafy green vegetables like collards and spinach

Find out more about calcium-rich foods at [UnlockFood.ca](https://www.unlockfood.ca)

2. Get enough vitamin D to keep your bones strong

Vitamin D helps you absorb calcium in foods. You can find vitamin D in:

- Milk
- Fortified soy and other fortified plant-based beverages
- Fatty fish like salmon and sardines
- Margarine
- Egg yolks
- Fortified yogurts (check the label)

Some people have trouble getting enough vitamin D. Health Canada recommends that all adults over the age of 50 take a supplement with 400 IU of vitamin D each day. Speak to a dietitian or health care provider if you do not drink milk or fortified plant-based beverages. They can help you decide if you need a vitamin D supplement in addition to eating other vitamin D-rich foods.

3. Get enough nutrients to keep your bones strong

Potassium, vitamin K and magnesium help your body absorb and use calcium. Get these important nutrients by eating a variety of healthy foods like vegetables and fruit, legumes (beans, peas, lentils), nuts, seeds, whole grains, and fish. Protein helps to build muscle, which helps keep bones strong. Choose protein-rich foods such as meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, legumes (beans, peas, lentils), eggs, tofu, nuts, and seeds.

4. Stay active to keep your bones strong

Aim to be active for at least 150 minutes each week. Here are some ideas to help keep your bones strong. Try:

- Weight-bearing exercises like running, walking, hiking, low impact aerobics, dancing, tennis and golf.
- Resistance activities like lifting weights or push-ups to help build muscle, which keeps your bones strong.
- Stretching exercises like yoga and tai chi to help improve balance and coordination, which will lower your risk of falling and breaking bones.

5. Limit caffeine to keep your bones strong

Having too much caffeine can decrease the amount of calcium you absorb. Aim for no more than 400mg of caffeine per day for adults - about 3 cups of coffee per day (1 cup = 8oz or 237mL). Pregnant and breastfeeding women should have no more than 300 mg caffeine per day (about 2 cups per day).

6. Limit alcohol to keep your bones strong

Drinking alcohol can contribute to bone loss. If you drink, follow Canada's Low Risk Drinking Guidelines and have no more than 2 standard drinks per day or 10 drinks per week for women and no more than 3 drinks per day or 15 drinks per week for men.

7. Don't eat too much salt (sodium) to keep your bones strong

Too much sodium, which is found in salt, can reduce bone density. Choose lower sodium foods by comparing food labels. Healthy adults need only 1500 mg of sodium per day.

How can a dietitian help?

A dietitian can assess your unique food choices to see if you're getting enough important nutrients, like calcium and vitamin D. They can also advise if you would benefit from a supplement. Most employee benefit plans cover dietitian services. Connect with a dietitian today!

Bottom Line

To keep your bones strong follow these 7 tips! Make sure to get enough calcium, vitamin D and other important nutrients, stay active, and limit caffeine, alcohol and sodium intake.

Visit www.NutritionMonth2023.ca for more on how to connect with a dietitian and for trusted food and nutrition information.