

Bone Health Essentials – What Every Woman Should Know

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When we think about what it means to be “healthy” we think about our heart, lungs, exercise, how we eat but we rarely think about our bones – until we are older, when our doctor talks to us about osteoporosis (severe bone loss) or sadly, we have a fracture. But by then, the damage is done. Here we will talk about the essentials of what every women needs to about how sound bone health is the foundation of an active lifestyle and lifelong physical independence. (image by Pure Yoga Texas)

Bone Basics

Bone is made up primarily of calcium, collagen (a structural protein) and phosphorus and functions to support and protect our body’s organs and tissues. It also serves as a reservoir for calcium as the cells that inhabit bone are continually storing and liberating calcium in the bloodstream in a process called “bone remodeling” through a balance of bone deposition and breakdown. For women, starting in our teens and into our early 30’s, the balance of bone deposition is greater than the rate of bone breakdown and, therefore, results in an increase in bone density or bone “strength”. Greater bone density reduces the risk of fractures.

Beyond our 30’s, and especially into menopause, bone density naturally declines. This decline results from a shift in the balance of calcium deposition/breakdown such that the rate of bone breakdown is greater than bone deposition. This is a function of changes in **estrogen levels** (a female reproductive hormone that declines precipitously in our 40’s and beyond menopause), nutritional status, physical activity, vitamin D production/absorption factors, just to name a few. However, if we are vigilant about our nutrition and the level and types of physical activity we engage in, we can significantly slow this decline allowing us to maintain greater bone density later into our lives.

5 Ways to Maximize your Bone Health

- Adequate calcium and Vitamin D intake: Most reproductive age women age require 1000mg of Calcium daily and perimenopausal and menopausal women require 1200mg daily for optimal bone health.
- Weight-bearing exercise: Resistance training with moderate to heavy weight and plyometric exercises.
- Eliminate tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption. The CDC defines “heavy alcohol consumption” for women as more than 8 drinks per week or >4 drinks consumed on one occasion.
- All women age 65 and older should have a bone density DEXA scan.
- If you are menopausal and have had a fracture, diabetes or other chronic illness, speak to your doctor about bone density testing.

For more information about optimizing bone health, check out this link from the National Osteoporosis Foundation: <https://www.bonehealthandosteoporosis.org/preventing-fractures/general-facts/>

