

7 Tips *to Bone Up!*

**It is never too
late to reduce
your risk of
osteoporosis-
related bone
fractures**



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CTW FEATURES

What comes to mind when you think about bones? If you are like most people, you probably envision your skeleton as a static structure that supports the rest of your body. But bones are living tissue, with a blood supply, nerves and a variety of functions – from structural support to mineral storage and blood cell production.

Osteoporosis occurs when new bone tissue doesn't replace old bone tissue fast enough and bones become weak. As people age, bone density loss is a concern, particularly for women. According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, 50 percent of women over the age of 50 will suffer an osteoporosis-related fracture.

The two biggest risk factors for osteoporosis are sex and age, so women over the age of 65 should have a bone density scan. Women under 65 who have other risk factors should be tested earlier to establish a baseline bone density. Other risks include personal history of fractures, family history (especially if a parent fractured a hip), petite frame, use of certain medications, smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.

“Osteoporosis is a silent disease, there are no outward clues that it exists and your doctor can't tell if it's there by just looking at you,” said Dr. Diane Schneider, retired associate professor of clinical medicine at University of California, San Diego, and the author of “The Complete Book of Bone Health.” Sounds dire, but there are plenty of things you can do to promote healthy bones at any age, even if you've been diagnosed with osteoporosis.

1 BUILDING BONES

“Our bones have to carry us through a lifetime,” said Dr. Lani Simpson, a chiropractor and Certified Clinical Densitometrist from Berkley, California, and author of “Dr. Lani's No Nonsense Bone Health Guide.” Protecting them should be a lifelong process.

When consulting with a patient, Simpson explores medical history, diet and lifestyle. “If someone is losing bone mass, I want to know why,” she said. It may be that a patient is simply losing bone mass due to a reduction in estrogen, but if they are having issues with calcium absorption, as someone who has inflammatory bowel disease or celiac disease would, it's important for bone health to manage those conditions.

For healthy bones, Schneider suggests focusing on the ABCDs of bone health: activity, balance, calcium, vitamin D and drugs. Plus, eat a diet full of other nutrients essential to bone health.



2 ACTIVITY

Any weight-bearing exercise is good for the bones. This includes activities like walking, jogging, dancing and weight lifting. If you have low bone density in your spine, consult with a physical therapist to learn safe exercises and proper form.

3 BALANCE

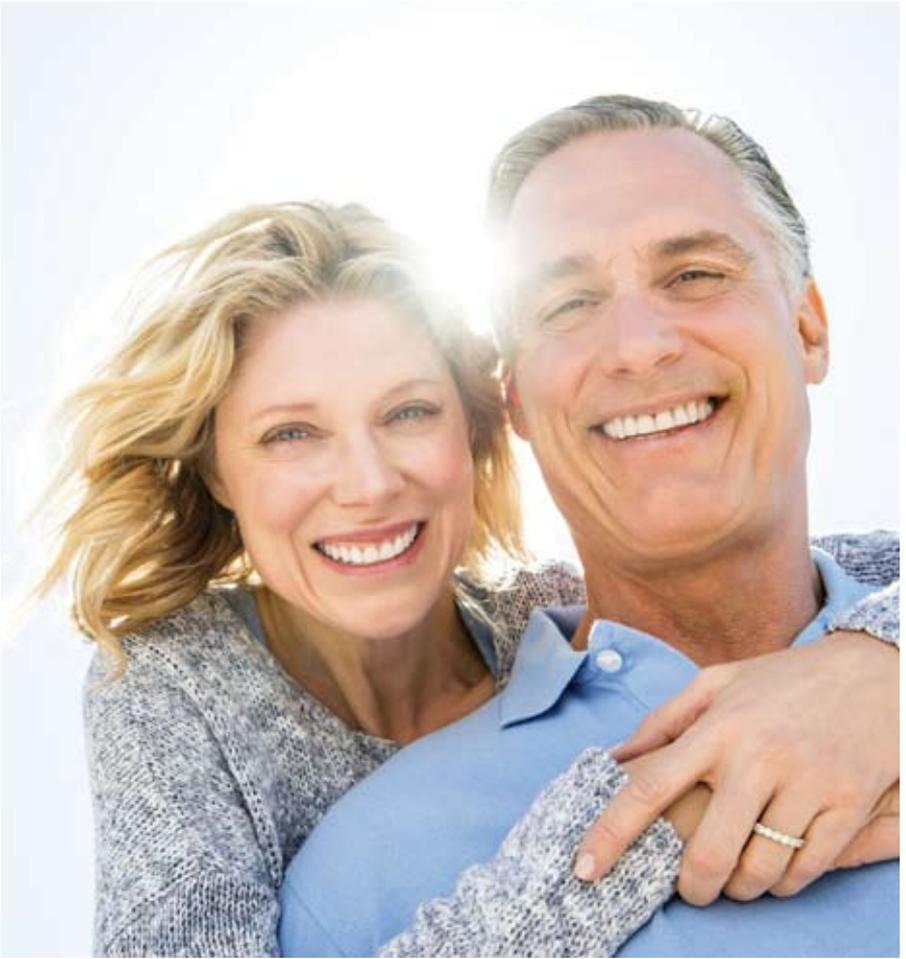
“No matter what your bone density is, if you don’t fall, you are unlikely to break your bones,” said Schneider. Do an activity regularly that builds balance. This could be as simple as standing on one leg while you brush your teeth or as complex as utilizing a balance ball for training. Yoga and tai chi are weight-bearing exercises that are also good for balance.



4 CALCIUM

Women over the age of 50 should get 1,200 mg of calcium every day. Low-fat dairy, green leafy vegetables, broccoli, legumes, beans, almonds, sesame seeds, molasses, salmon and tofu are all good sources of calcium. If you don’t get enough calcium through diet, take a supplement.





5 VITAMIN D

Vitamin D is needed for calcium absorption. Women over 50 need 600 IUs daily. The sun is the primary source of vitamin D, but cold climates don't offer adequate light year round, and people are concerned about unprotected exposure. Foods don't have enough vitamin D for bone support, so take a supplement.

6 DRUGS

Following a good diet and leading an active lifestyle can help you to decrease your risk of bone loss and fracture, but if you are in the osteoporosis range, drug therapy is standard. Most medications for osteoporosis prevent bone loss, though some promote bone formation. Discuss the risks of each medication with your doctor, the length of treatment and be sure that your needs are reassessed regularly.

7 DIET AND SUPPLEMENTATION

"Bone is very complex, it needs a variety of nutrients to be healthy," said Simpson. She recommends eating a diet consisting of a variety of whole foods that provide all the nutrients needed for bone health and taking supplements to make up for the rest. Protein, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc, vitamin A, vitamin K and B vitamins are all vital to bone health.

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50 *plus*

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