

It's never too soon to safeguard your bones

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(HealthDay)—Bone health is literally something you build on throughout your life, not just as a child. And the efforts you put in now will keep bones strong and help prevent the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis

later on, as you age.

Most of the 10 million Americans living with osteoporosis are women, but men are at risk, too, according to the National Osteoporosis Foundation. It weakens bones, leaving them at greater risk of fracture. Here are 4 steps to better bone health for women and men.

First, make sure your diet has calcium, an essential mineral, and vitamin D. These nutrients work in tandem on bone building. Low-fat dairy, such as plain yogurt and milk, is a great calcium source. Also, look for milk that's been fortified with [vitamin D](#). You can get some D from fatty fish, like tuna and salmon, spending limited time in the sun, and supplements.

Second, eat healthy in general. Magnesium, potassium and vitamins C and K are also important. They're in many fruits, peppers and leafy green veggies. Get enough protein, but not too much, which could lower your [calcium level](#). Skip soda and limit alcohol, salt and caffeine.

Third, get the types of exercise that support [bone health](#), primarily strength-training and weight-bearing cardio activities—those that are done standing, like walking. Add workouts that help with balance, like yoga and tai chi, to improve posture and prevent falls, the key culprit in [broken bones](#).

Finally, don't smoke. Smoking decreases all-important [bone](#) density.

More information: The National Osteoporosis Foundation has a wealth of advice for building [stronger bones](#) through diet and exercise.

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