

Exercise in early 20s may lower risk of osteoporosis

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Physical exercise in the early twenties improves bone development and may reduce the risk of fractures later in life, reveals a study of more than 800 Swedish men carried out at the Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

The strength of our bones is determined early in life. The more bone mass we put on when young, the smaller the risk of fractures as we grow older. Previous research has shown that exercise before and during puberty is particularly important for [bone development](#).

Now researchers at the University of Gothenburg's Sahlgrenska Academy have shown that exercise in the early twenties also aids bone growth, countering the risk of [broken bones](#) later in life.

Physical activity increases bonemass

Mattias Lorentzon and his colleagues at the Sahlgrenska Academy's Centre for Bone and Arthritis Research show in a study of 833 Swedish men that those who increased their levels of physical activity between the ages of 19 and 24 also increased their [bone density](#) in the hips, lumbar spine, arms and lower legs – while those who decreased their physical activity during this period had significantly more brittle bones.

Reduces risk of fractures

"The men who increased or maintained high levels of physical activity also developed larger and thicker bones in their lower arms and legs," says Lorentzon. "These findings suggest that maintaining or, ideally, increasing physical activity can improve [bone growth](#) in our youth, which probably reduces the risk of fractures later on."

Osteoporosis is a widespread disorder which leads to an increased risk of bone fractures. Sweden is one of the highest-risk countries in this respect, with one in two women and one in four men here having an osteoporotic fracture at some time in life.

The article "Increased physical activity is associated with enhanced development of peak [bone mass](#) in men: A five year longitudinal study" was published in the *Journal of Bone and Mineral Research* on 13 January.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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