

## Physical Activity for Best Bone Health

People who are active have stronger musculoskeletal and neuromuscular systems, lowering their risk of osteoporosis-related falls and fractures. This is especially true for those who do moderate to vigorous physical activities, such as weight-bearing activities, at least three times a week for a minimum of 30 minutes.

Muscles pulling on the bones build stronger, denser bones. The more bone mass you build from birth to age 35, the better off you will be during the years of gradual bone loss. After age 35, the body breaks down bone mass faster than it builds it back up. Exercise can also help you maintain bone density later in life.

Besides strength training every other day, additional exercises for building bone promoting strength includes walking, running, and hiking, jumping rope, stair climbing, step aerobics, dancing, racquet sports and other activities that require your muscles to work against gravity. Swimming and biking, is good for cardiovascular fitness, but are not bone-building exercises.

If you already have osteoporosis, you might wonder whether you should exercise at all. The answer for most people is YES. You should speak to your doctor to learn what types of exercises you can safely do to preserve bone and strengthen your back and hips. Keep in mind, however, that exercise alone can't prevent or cure osteoporosis.

Here are some exercise tips for bone health:

- Even if you do not have osteoporosis, you should check with your health care provider before you start an exercise program.
- Warm up before starting and cool down at the end of each exercise session.
- For the best benefit to your bone health combine several weight-bearing exercises.
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercising.
- Vary the different types of exercise you do each week.
- Combine weight bearing and resistant exercise with aerobic exercises to help improve your overall health.
- Bring your spouse or friend along to help you keep going, or better yet, bring your family and encourage them to be healthy.
- Add more physical activity to your day; take the stairs versus the elevator, park farther away, and walk to your co-worker's office rather than emailing.

Children ages 6 through 17 should include 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. This includes at least 3 days a week of aerobic, 3 days of strength training and 3 days per week of bone strengthening activities.

Adults ages 18 and older need 2.5 to 500 hours per week of moderate exercise or 1 hour and 15 minutes to 2.5 hours of vigorous physical activity per week. Plus they need at least 2 days of strength training per week.

Adults 65 or older should also include balance activities if falling is a risk.

Here are some suggested activities for preventing osteoporosis. Some of these are more advanced than others:

- Walking
- Dancing
- Race walking
- Pack packing
- Hiking
- Jogging
- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Pilates
- Weight lifting
- Low-impact aerobics
- Step aerobics
- Snow skiing
- Gardening
- Stair climbing
- Elastic band exercises
- House cleaning
- Soccer
- Volleyball
- Basketball
- Bowling
- Tennis
- Golf, pulling clubs
- Gymnastics
- Pilates
- Baseball/Softball
- Tennis

Sources: National Osteoporosis Foundation. "Osteoporosis Exercise for Strong Bonews."; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.