



Taking Charge of Your Bone Health

Although much of your bone health depends on genetics, you can benefit from a bone health road map to maintain the best of what you have. Here are some fundamentals to keep in mind.

1. **GET A BONE DENSITY TEST** that will help you determine where you stand. Whether your insurance company will cover this test—also called a DXA or bone mineral density test—depends on your age and certain risk factors. Speak with your primary care physician or gynecologist.
2. **KNOW YOUR T-SCORE** and keep it handy so you can compare to your next test.
3. **DAILY CALCIUM** from food + supplements = 1,000 – 1,200 mg. Read nutrition labels for calcium!
 - On days that you eat 2 servings of dairy or calcium-rich foods you may not need a calcium supplement. On days you don't eat 2 servings of calcium rich food, you may need a supplement. But probably only 1 500–600 mg supplement.
 - If you do not eat dairy foods, you need to find other calcium-rich foods or take a calcium supplement to meet your daily requirement (only 500–600 mg at a time).
4. **VITAMIN D** is needed for calcium to be absorbed. Few foods provide vitamin D. Although sun exposure is a source, it is not reliable. Take a vitamin D supplement to get 1,000 – 2,000 IU per day.
5. **QUIT SMOKING**—Smoking increases fracture risk.
6. **MODERATE ALCOHOL**—More than 2 drinks a day affects vitamin D levels, nutrition, and fall risk.
7. **MODERATE SUGAR, SALT AND CAFFEINE**—Excess sugar can increase your chance of diabetes and diabetes can increase your risk of breaking bones. Try to limit sugar to 25 grams a day (6 teaspoons). Salt causes calcium to leave the bones. Try to limit salt to 2,500 milligrams a day (1 teaspoon). More than six cups of caffeine can also cause calcium loss. Try to keep intake under 6 cups a day.
8. **ENGAGE IN CONSISTENT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY** that challenges your bones to stimulate bone building. This means applying a variety of weights and movements to the bones. Weight bearing activity loads the skeleton and prevents bone loss.
9. **WORK ON GREAT POSTURE, BALANCE AND USE PROPER BODY MECHANICS** to protect your bones. Modify certain activities (strength training, yoga, Pilates, etc.) to avoid forward flexion (rounding your back), extreme twisting and extreme side bending. Do posture, strength and balance exercises daily.
10. **PREVENT FALLS** as you get older by watching your step, keeping a clear path at home, using good lighting and hand railings. P.S.—be mindful, stay off of ladders and stop multitasking! ☺