

Bathroom Briefs

Your line to good health!

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What You Need to Know About Your Bone Health

Overview

- **Nearly half the American population over the age of 18** - about 48 percent - are affected by musculoskeletal (bone and joint) conditions, according to *The Burden of Musculoskeletal Conditions in the United States*.
- Bone and joint conditions are **the most common cause of severe long-term pain and physical disability** worldwide affecting hundreds of millions of people.
- Musculoskeletal conditions include **back pain, arthritis, traumatic injuries, osteoporosis and childhood conditions**.

That's right, T-score. If you had to think twice about what a T-score is - and no, it's not a golf term - chances are you probably don't know your bone mineral density (BMD) levels, or you haven't been tested. Don't worry, you're not alone.

Do you know your...
Blood pressure?
Cholesterol level?
Weight?

T-score?

Bones. Bone mineral density. T-score. Yes, you should add those to that list of health factors you need to be concerned about so that you can enjoy lifelong health and an active lifestyle.

Until a few years ago, many conditions - such as osteoporosis - were considered "old people's" diseases. Today we know differently. Steps to improve bone health start at an early age. Weak bones can affect individuals of all ages.

The T-score reveals whether bones are weak or strong, and what the chances are for breaking one of them. If you thought brittle bones are a natural part of aging, please think again.

Why Should You Be Concerned?

We want you to be Fit to a T™ so that you can enjoy good bone health. Whether you are in your 20s, 40s or 70s, it's not too early or too late to make changes in your diet, exercise program and lifestyle to strengthen your bones. *If Americans don't take action, by the year 2020, half of all persons older than age 50 will be at risk for fractures related to osteoporosis and low-bone mass, according to the U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Bone Health and Osteoporosis.*

Here is the Good News.

By focusing on prevention and taking action, you can alter the course of the disease. Three things that you can do to improve your bone health and make your bones stronger are to take in enough calcium and vitamin D and get enough physical activity every day.

Warning Signs

A Broken Bone: A broken bone (fracture) as an adult does not always mean you have osteoporosis - but it could be a warning sign that your bones are weak, especially if the break is from

normal activities or during a minor fall.

Back Pain or Spinal Deformities: Back pain that will not quit could be a sign that you have a spinal fracture. This occurs when bones in your back become so weak that they fracture and collapse.

Loss of Height: A fractured bone in your spine could collapse onto itself causing you to shrink. Multiple fractures can cause the spine to form a curve causing the disfigurement known as a "dowager's hump."

How Do You Build Strong Bones?

Daily physical activity and a diet with enough calcium and vitamin D can help prevent osteoporosis, according to the U.S. Surgeon General's Report.

Let's Get Physical

Building strong bones begins with daily exercise of at least 60 minutes for children and 30 minutes for adults. The best types of exercises for healthy bones are weight-bearing and strength-building activities. Jogging, tennis and walking are types of weight-bearing activities. They are important because they force muscles and bones to work against gravity and they put stress on the limbs. Strength-building exercises - which lead to stronger muscles and bone - include weight-lifting, calisthenics and resistance machines. Before you start an exercise program, or if you have osteoporosis, check in first with your physician or other healthcare professional. Individuals with low bone mass may need to skip certain exercises to avoid medical problems, such as breaking a bone.

Your Body Needs Calcium

Calcium is a building block of bone and is key to having strong bones. Based upon your age, your body needs different amounts of calcium. Talk with your physician or other healthcare professional for the best sources of calcium from your meals.

Don't Forget the Vitamin D

Individuals need vitamin D to help their bodies absorb calcium from the gastrointestinal tract and to keep bones strong and healthy. The older you become, the more of this vitamin you need. Where does vitamin D come from? The vitamin can be synthesized in skin from exposure to the sun or ingested in foods such as fortified dairy products, egg yolks, fish (i.e., salmon, mackerel and tuna), liver or in supplements. Consult your physician or other healthcare professional for the appropriate dosage for you.

Source: Bone and Joint Initiative at <http://www.usbj.org>