Osteoporosis Nutrition for Bone Health

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Simple ways to manage osteoporosis

Some osteoporosis prevention and treatments involve dietary and lifestyle choices. There are several proven ways to help reduce the effects of osteoporosis and prevent future fractures. And that's work on bone health nutrition; let's get into it.

Increase calcium in your diet

Calcium strengthens bones. Experts recommend a daily intake of 1,000 milligrams for premenopausal women and 1,200 milligrams a day for postmenopausal women. Excellent sources of calcium include:

- Dairy products.
- Fish.
- Leafy vegetables.
- Calcium-fortified juices, breads and cereals.
- Calcium-fortified dairy products.

Calcium Rich Food

- Milk.
- Yogurt made with low-fat or whole milk.
- Cheese.
- Tofu.
- Canned salmon and sardines (with bones).
- Kale or broccoli.
- Calcium-fortified orange juice.
- Calcium-fortified soy, almond and rice beverages.
- Breads made with calcium-fortified flour.

Get plenty of Vitamin D

You need Vitamin D to absorb calcium. Foods rich in Vitamin D include:

- Eggs.
- Fatty fish like salmon.
- Cereal.
- Milk fortified with Vitamin D.
- Supplements.

Next page: exercise and the importance of calcium and Vitamin D.

Exercise

Support your diet with plenty of exercise. Exercise strengthens bones and muscles and helps prevent bone loss. It also keeps you active – immobility can lead to osteoporosis. These types of weight-bearing exercises should be done four times a week:

- Walking.
- Jogging.
- Dancing.
- Tennis.
- Racket sports.

Importance of calcium and Vitamin D

Everyday stress from daily activity gradually wears away at your bones. Bone is a living tissue, constantly forming and breaking itself down. Two groups of cells maintain bone structure. Osteoclasts eliminate weak bones and then osteoblasts fill in the crevices to build new bone. In early adulthood, this remodeling cycle is completed every three to four months.

As people age, the rebuilding process slows down – the osteoclasts remove old bone faster than the osteoblasts can build it. It becomes harder to absorb calcium and other nutrients like Vitamin D.

Calcium benefits

Sufficient amounts of calcium balance the remodeling process. In older adults, adequate calcium levels can slow bone loss and lower the risk of osteoporosis. Canada's Food Guide recommends:

- Three servings of milk and alternatives including yogurt, cheese, calcium-fortified beverages, puddings, custards (two servings if under 50)

If you avoid dairy, other alternative food sources are high in calcium. These include:

- Calcium-fortified soy beverages.
- Calcium-fortified orange juice.
- Fish.
- Tofu.

Extra *dietary* calcium is not harmful. However, getting more calcium than you need from *supplements* can be harmful. Do not take extra calcium from supplements if your diet is already giving you enough calcium.

Next page: additional benefits of calcium and Vitamin D.

Calcium Supplement

If you aren't getting the recommended amount of calcium from your diet, ask your doctor about a low-dose calcium supplement. **Do not take calcium supplements without proper guidance from your physician.**

If you find it hard to get the suggested amounts of calcium through food alone, your doctor may advise a calcium-rich diet combined with a low-dose calcium supplement. Calcium supplements are prepared as tablets, capsules, or liquids.

Consider:

- Side effects – Calcium supplements may cause stomach upset, constipation or nausea.
- Tablet size – Tablets are large and can be difficult to swallow.
- Directions – Calcium carbonate must be taken with food or immediately after eating. Calcium citrate, calcium lactate and calcium gluconate can be taken at any time. Take calcium with plenty of water.
- Dosage – Take no more than 500-600 mg of calcium at once. Taking smaller doses throughout the day is better than a larger dose once a day.

Antacids like TUMS are a good source of calcium. These are considered calcium carbonates and should be taken with food.

Only take calcium supplements under the guidance of a physician. Show your doctor or pharmacist the bottle to be sure that you are not taking too much.

Excess calcium from supplements can be harmful. Too much calcium has been associated with constipation, digestive problems, kidney stones, heart problems and even prostate cancer.

Advantages of Vitamin D for Bone Health Nutrition

Vitamin D is vital to bone health. It helps strengthen bones, partly by promoting calcium absorption. Vitamin D improves muscle function, which in turn increases balance and reduces the risk of falling.

The Sun's rays react with your skin to produce Vitamin D. People don't always get as much sun exposure as they need - sunscreen reduces what exposure they do get. With age, people's ability to produce Vitamin D decreases. Due to a combination of these reasons, many people have low Vitamin D.

There are few dietary sources of Vitamin D – it's nearly impossible for adults to get the recommended amount of Vitamin D through nutrition alone.

Doctors recommend routine daily supplements as a preventative treatment for osteoporosis:

- Healthy adults between 19-50 need 400 – 1,000 IU daily.
- Those over 50 or those at risk for osteoporosis should take 800 – 2,000 IU daily.

Taking more than 2,000 IU of Vitamin D per day should not be done without medical supervision.

Vitamin D is fat-soluble. If you miss your daily supplement, you can take double the amount the next time. This is not recommended for long periods and cannot be done with other medications or supplements.

Talk to your doctor about finding the right kind of Vitamin D supplement and the appropriate dosage so you can have adequate bone health nutrition.