

Tips to Build Healthy Bones

Building healthy bones in your teen years lets you do the things you enjoy, like sports and staying active. It also sets you up for good bone health for the rest of your life. In this handout, you will learn why building good bone health in your teen years is so important. You will also learn tips to build good bone health.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE HEALTHY BONES?

Having **healthy bones** (also called **good bone health**) lets you do the things you enjoy, like sports or doing other physical activity. Healthy bones also keeps the rest of your body healthy.

WHY IS IMPORTANT TO BUILD HEALTHY BONES NOW?

There are a few reasons why it's important to build healthy bones now:

- **Having healthy bones might not be the first thing on your mind right now, but your teen years are actually the most important years for building healthy bones.**
- **By age 18, girls have built up almost all (90%) of their bones. This is also true for boys by age 20.** By building healthy bones now, you set yourself up for good bone health for the rest of your life.
- **Building healthy bones now lowers your risk of developing bone problems later in life, like osteopenia or osteoporosis.** Osteopenia is when you have lower than usual bone density (how dense and strong your bones are). Osteoporosis is when your bones are very fragile and can break very easily. Usually, osteopenia and osteoporosis affects older adults or the elderly. Building healthy bones while you're a teen helps lower your risk of developing osteopenia and osteoporosis when you get older.

HOW CAN I BUILD HEALTHY BONES NOW?

- **Eat the right vitamins and minerals.** Vitamin D, vitamin K and calcium are all important vitamins and minerals that work together to build healthy bones. You should eat at least 1,000 milligrams (mg) of calcium every day and 600 international units (IU) of vitamin D every day.
- **Get moving!** Exercise is a good way to build strong bones. Things like walking, running, skiing, climbing stairs and jumping rope are best when it comes to building strong bones. Resistance training (where you use weight or resistance bands), like lifting weights, is also good for healthy bones. Remember, some exercise is better than none!

Did you know?

Vitamin D is not naturally in many types of foods. Instead, it's found in sunlight or is added to foods, like orange juice or some cereals.

Calcium and vitamin K are found in many types of food. You can find calcium in foods like dairy products, cooked spinach and soy milk. Vitamin K is in dark, green vegetables like lettuce, broccoli and cucumbers.

A note for your parents...

Vitamin D and calcium are important when it comes to building your teen's healthy bones. Getting enough vitamin D and calcium in your teen's diet can also be hard. Call the doctor if you're worried about whether your teen is getting enough of the vitamins and minerals he/she needs for healthy bones.

Encourage your teen to eat as much healthy, vitamin-rich food as possible. You should also encourage your teen to stay active and do things he/she enjoys, like sports or other types of exercise.