



Your Experts for Life

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Calcium and Exercise are Important to your Bone Health

Have you ever wondered what life would be like if you didn't have any bones? Bones allow us to stand up straight and do the everyday activities that we take for granted like walking, running, and jumping. The human skeleton has 206 bones that need to stay strong for us to have an active, healthy lifestyle. When we think of bones, we don't think of them as living tissue but bones are alive and are constantly changing.

Ninety-nine percent of our calcium reserves are found in our bones. Until about the age of 35, your body is storing calcium in your bones. Most bone is made between 10 to 18 years of age and is known as peak bone mass. It is important to get enough weight-bearing exercise and calcium for the best peak bone mass. If you do not get enough calcium and exercise during your teen years, it could lead to a condition later on in life known as osteoporosis where the bones become fragile and break easily.

Many adults and teens do not like to drink milk and select other beverages that do not provide them with the nutrients that they need from milk. You can try flavoring milk with sugar free or regular chocolate syrup, vanilla or almond extract, or make a fruit smoothie from frozen fruit and milk. Low-fat or nonfat buttermilk or sweet acidophilus milk are other selections that provide a flavor that some people may prefer to regular low-fat or nonfat milk. Getting the recommended 500mg/day of calcium for 1-3 year olds, 800 mg/day for 4-8 year olds, 1,300 mg/day for 9-18 year olds, 1,000 mg/day of calcium for 19-50 year olds, and 1,200 mg/day for adults over 50 is important for maintaining bone health.

Milk Group foods are the easiest way to get the recommended amount of calcium into your body. There are many ways to include milk and yogurt in your meals and snacks:

- Try a “skinny” latte with nonfat milk and artificially sweetened flavoring.
- Use nonfat milk to prepare your oatmeal or hot chocolate.
- Nonfat dry milk can be added to casseroles, cream soups, and mashed potatoes.
- Use plain yogurt instead of sour cream in dips or other places where sour cream is used as a topping.
- Plain yogurt can also be used in place of some of the mayonnaise used in sauces, salad dressings, and as a sandwich spread.

When cooking with whole, 2%, 1%, or nonfat milk, there is no difference in the cooking properties between the different kinds of milk. Cooking with 1% or skim milk is healthier for the heart than whole or 2% because of the saturated fat and cholesterol they contain. This is true for other products made from milk.

Recipes can be altered to make them contain less fat by experimenting with low-fat dairy products. When altering a recipe, you should make small changes each time you try the recipe to avoid a poor end product. Try some of the following suggestions:

- Evaporated skim milk used in sauces, desserts, or soups to replace cream or evaporated whole milk.
- Fat-free cheese can be used to add flavor but it does not melt well. Use reduced fat cheese or a small amount of strong flavored, high-fat cheese to add flavor to baked dishes.
- Fat-free or reduced fat ricotta cheese in place of whole milk ricotta.
- Fat-free, reduced fat sour cream, or plain nonfat yogurt instead of regular sour cream.
- Neufchatel to replace regular cream cheese.

Don't be afraid to try other low-fat alternatives. There are always new products being introduced into the market to help people seeking a low-fat lifestyle.

Other foods contain calcium but are not as good a source as dairy products:

- Yogurt (1 cup) 400 mg
- Milk (1 cup) 300 mg
- Calcium fortified orange juice (1 cup) 300 mg
- Calcium fortified soy milk (1 cup) check the label
- Canned salmon with bones (3 ounces) 203 mg
- Collard greens (1 cup) 200 mg
- Almonds (1/4 cup) 90 mg
- Broccoli, raw (1 cup) 43 mg
- Baked beans (1/2 cup) 43 mg
- Corn tortillas (6 inch) 20 mg

Weight-bearing exercise is also important for maintaining bone health and reducing the risk of osteoporosis. Swimming is a great exercise but it is not a weight-bearing exercise like walking, jogging, hiking, aerobics, dancing, basketball, and softball to name a few.

Other ways to protect your bones include avoiding drinking heavily or smoking, limiting your salt intake, eating more fruits and vegetables, and getting enough vitamin D to help with the absorption of calcium.

For more information visit: www.aces.edu and click on publications or call your local Alabama Cooperative Extension System office. In Cullman, check your local listing for Cable Channel 27, WCQT-LP, Eatwell program in May for tips on cooking with calcium-rich foods.

Cheryl Vasse

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cheryl Vasse".

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