

Keeping your bones strong at every age

16 August 2019, by Scott Gilbert



Falling may be painful, especially if the landing is less than graceful. Even a few steps out the front door can carry with them the risk of falling.

"Don't wait until you fall to start thinking about [bone strength](#)," said Dr. Philip Boshia, a physician with Penn State Sports Medicine in State College. "Bone health is important for [women](#) and men at any age, but especially for older people."

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons offers the following suggestions for building and taking care of your bones throughout your life:

Children to young adults

Children and [young adults](#) are building toward peak bone mass—the strongest bones they'll ever have. Most people reach peak bone mass between the ages of 25 and 30.

"To some extent, genetics determines the peak, but lifestyle influences, such as diet and exercise, are also factors," Boshia said.

40s

After age 40, bone mass slowly decreases. Taking

1,000 milligrams of [calcium](#) and 1,000 International Units (IU) of vitamin D per day can help maintain your bones. Also weight-bearing exercise, such as running and brisk walking, and resistance training (muscle-strengthening) are important to maintain muscle and [bone strength](#) and prevent falls.

50s and 60s

After age 50, the daily recommended calcium intake for men remains 1,000 milligrams per day. Women who are over 50, entering menopause or have gone through menopause should increase their calcium intake to 1,200 milligrams per day.

As levels of estrogen drop during menopause, rapid bone loss can occur. All women 65 or older—including women 60 to 64 years old who have an increased fracture risk—should get a bone-density study.

"If the bone-density study shows osteoporosis, it may be reasonable to start taking a medication called a bisphosphonate, which you can get in a variety of forms," Boshia said. "Some are pills taken on a weekly or monthly basis and other varieties can be taken intravenously."

Other medications to improve bone density include calcitonin, which you can administer in a [nasal spray](#); [parathyroid hormone](#), which is taken by injection; or a category of medications called selective estrogen receptor modulators.

Age 70 and beyond

After age 70, both men and women should take 1,200 milligrams of calcium per day and 800 IU of vitamin D per day. Men become much more likely to have lower bone density and may suffer fractures. Some men may want to consider getting a bone-density study.

"For people of this age, avoiding falls is crucial," Boshia said. "Maintaining balance and muscle strength through exercise and maintaining strong

bones through adequate calcium and vitamin D intake can help decrease the risk of severe fractures from falls."

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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