

Nutrifocus
Keeping Bones Strong

Your bones are changing all the time. When you are young, your body makes new bone faster than it breaks old bone down. This happens until your early 30's. Then bone decreases slowly after this age. After menopause, you lose more bone than you make.

Here are the most important things you can do to build bones in your younger years, help your body get and keep the most calcium from the foods you eat:

- get enough calcium in your diet - this builds bone
- get enough Vitamin D in your diet - Vitamin D helps you absorb calcium and deposit it in your bones
- do regular weight-bearing activity. Weight-bearing activity is any activity you do on your feet where your bones support your weight. Examples are: walking, jogging, hiking, aerobic dancing, running, stair-climbing, skipping rope, skiing, etc. Activities that involve lifting extra weight can also help.

Your body will lose less calcium if you do the following:

- limit soft drinks
- follow the Food Guide Pyramid so your diet is not too high in protein
- don't smoke or stop smoking
- limit the alcohol you drink (no more than 2 drinks a day)
- keep caffeine intake low (2 to 3 cups of coffee a day)

If you follow the above suggestions, you may avoid getting weak bones later in life (osteoporosis) because your bones will be strong.

References: 1. Mayo Clinic Health Letter, "Osteoporosis," 10/97.
 2. C. Raab, "Women and Osteoporosis," 2/97.

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