



Healthy Bone

Osteoporosis

Protecting Your Bones ‘Source from – Physicians committee for Responsible Medicine’

Osteoporosis is a bone-thinning condition commonly seen in elderly men and in postmenopausal women. It can lead to dangerous and potentially disabling fractures, particularly in the vertebrae and the hip. Approximately one in two women and up to one in four men age 50 and older will break a bone due to osteoporosis.

- Calcium is an essential mineral for maintenance of bone integrity, but studies show that adding more calcium to your diet doesn't automatically protect your bones. In an 18-year prospective analysis of 72,000 postmenopausal women, researchers found that higher total calcium intake was not associated with decreased fracture risk.
- In order to protect your bones you not only need calcium in your diet, but you also need to make sure you keep calcium in your bones.

How to Get Calcium Into Your Bones?

1. Get calcium from greens, beans, or fortified foods. Recommended calcium intake is 1,000 mg/day for men and women 19-50 years old, and 1,200 mg/day for those older than 51.³ As a general rule, the most healthful calcium sources are green leafy vegetables and legumes. While dairy products do contain calcium, they also contain animal proteins and growth factors, lactose sugar, occasional contaminants, and a substantial amount of fat and cholesterol (in all but the defatted versions), making them an unfavorable choice for obtaining calcium. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, collards, kale, mustard greens, green cabbage, and other greens are loaded with highly absorbable calcium and a host of other healthful nutrients. Exceptions include spinach and chard, which contain calcium but hold onto it very tenaciously, making it difficult for you to absorb much of it. You will find plenty of calcium in chickpeas, tofu, or other bean or bean products as well. These beans and greens also contain magnesium, which your body requires along with calcium to build bones, making them optimal dietary choices for improving bone health. Calcium-fortified products contain very concentrated amounts of calcium. For example, calcium-fortified orange or apple juices contain 300 milligrams or more of calcium per cup in a form as absorbable as cow's milk.

2. Get adequate amounts of vitamin D. Vitamin D controls your body's use of calcium. Without vitamin D, only 10-15 percent of dietary calcium is absorbed.⁴ Thus, in order to maintain bone health and to experience benefits from calcium, vitamin D intake must be sufficient. In fact, while calcium in dairy products alone may not directly strengthen bones, increasing intake of vitamin D does.