Tips to Improve Your Bone Health

With proper nutrition, physical activity, and regular check-ups and screenings, Americans can have strong bones and live longer, healthier lives. Here's how.

Eat foods rich in calcium and vitamin D.
Calcium and vitamin D are important to your bone health. Learn about foods that are naturally high in calcium and vitamin D. Eat a balanced diet with a variety of fruits and vegetables, grains, and non-fat or low-fat dairy products. Sunshine is also a good source of vitamin D. If you are not getting enough calcium and vitamin D in your diet, supplements can be helpful.

Eat foods that are high in calcium.
Milk, yogurt, cheese, canned salmon with bones, broccoli, canned sardines and fortified foods such as fruit juices, cereals, breads, and soy products are excellent sources of calcium.

Be physically active every day.
Many types of physical activity contribute to bone health and also improve balance, coordination, and muscle strength. At least 30 minutes a day of weight bearing and strengthening physical activity is recommended for adults, and 60 minutes a day is recommended for children.

Maintain a healthy body weight throughout your life.
Being underweight increases the risk of bone loss and fractures.

Protect yourself from falls.
Fractures are often caused by falls. Protect your bones, especially if you are over the age of 60. Have your vision checked. Make your home safer by removing items you may trip over, being sure that you have enough lighting, wearing shoes with good support, and installing handrails.

Avoid smoking and limit alcohol intake.
Smoking and heavy alcohol use reduce your bone mass and increase your risk for broken bones.

Discuss increased risks with your doctor.
You may be at greater risk for fractures if you are older than 65, have broken a bone after age 50, have relatives with a broken bone, have certain medical conditions (for example, hyperthyroidism or arthritis) and take certain prescription medications (for example, thyroid medicine or oral glucocorticoids). Check with your health care professional about your risks and find out if you need a bone density test. Once you have the test, your health care professional may prescribe medications that treat bone disease and may recommend calcium or vitamin D supplements.

Call toll free 1-866-718-BONE to order a free publication from the Surgeon General about bone health. For more information visit www.surgeongeneral.gov.