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Building Stronger Bones

Brittle, weak bones can lead to potential health complications, including increased likelihood of falls and fractures. This is especially true for those at risk for osteoporosis, a common bone disorder in which bones become fragile and more likely to fracture.

To help keep your bones healthy and strong, follow these important tips:



1. Add more Calcium and Vitamin D to your diet.

These two nutrients are meant to be taken simultaneously because Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium, which helps build bones. If you have gone through menopause, [Mahnaz Saoudian MD](#), a rheumatologist at Group Health, recommends:

- 1,200 mg of calcium daily
- 800 IU of vitamin D daily

"This helps a lot. It can – to some extent – protect you from having bone loss," she explains. Otherwise, eating foods high in calcium and vitamin D are critical for bone health, regardless of your age.

2. Exercise to strengthen your bones.

Weight-bearing activities, like walking, jogging, dancing or weight lifting, also can help prevent bone loss. Weight-bearing exercises stimulate bones to produce more cells, slowing bone loss.

"Yoga and stretching exercises, they help, but not as much as cardio and weight bearing exercises," Dr. Saoudian explains. Physical activity also improves balance and coordination, which helps reduce falls and broken bones.

3. If you smoke, stop!

Smoking can affect calcium absorption and estrogen levels, and therefore, smokers are at a higher risk of developing osteoporosis. Similarly, drinking more than three servings of alcohol every day puts you at a higher risk as well.

4. Stay hydrated.

Keep hydrated year round – not just in the summertime. Drink plain water when possible. Do not rely on coffee, tea, soft drinks, etc. for hydration.

Want Better Bone Health? Try These Calcium-Rich Foods

In addition to being a key nutrient for your overall health, calcium also is an essential building block specifically for maintaining bone health. When increasing your calcium intake through dairy food, you also increase your protein intake. And, your body can absorb more calcium from food than from supplements.

Everyone should include three servings of calcium-rich foods in their diet each day. Below are several options to help add more calcium to your diet:

- Low-fat fruit yogurt
- Skim, 1% or 2% milk
- Swiss Cheese
- Mozzarella Cheese
- Soy Beans (Edamame)
- Cooked Spinach or Kale
- Canned sardines
- Sesame seeds
- Broccoli
- Arugula



Recipe: Tom's Urban Chopped Salad

Quinoa (keen-wah) is a "super grain" that's often overlooked. It's rich in Vitamin C and high in protein and fiber, but low in carbohydrates, making it the perfect ingredient for amplifying any meal.

Pair this grain with fresh vegetables and you have a nutritional powerhouse in the form of Tom's Urban Chopped Salad.

Prep time: Approximately 20 minutes (if the chicken is already prepared)

Ingredients (makes 2 servings):

- 1 cup shredded romaine lettuce
- 1 cup spring mixed greens
- ¼ cup cooked quinoa
- ¼ cup diced tomatoes
- 1 tbsp roasted, low-sodium sunflower seeds
- 4 oz baked chicken

Directions:

1. Baked the chicken to desired doneness and cut into small strips.
2. Cook the quinoa. (One cup of dry quinoa usually requires cooking in two cups of water or other liquid of choice.)
3. Layer quinoa and remaining salad ingredients on top of the shredded romaine and spring-mix lettuce.
4. Top with chicken breast and drizzle with your favorite salad dressing.



Photo courtesy of Savory Sights.