

# HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'! NICE BONES

KEEPING BONES AND MUSCLES HEALTHY AS YOU AGE

With columnist NISHA JACKSON

**M**ost people don't start thinking about the health of their bones until midlife or later, which is often too late when the goal is to protect against significant bone loss and fracture risks.

Researchers have confirmed that addressing the strength of one's bones should start in childhood and continue throughout early adulthood, the time in which the body is building most of the bone that must sustain it through life. By age 20, girls have gained approximately 95 percent of their peak bone mass. For boys around this age it is a few years later, about age 22. However, there is a two-year time frame during early adolescence that is crucial for bone development, when 26 percent of total adult bone is made. For girls it typically begins at age 12 and in boys age 14. During this 2-year period of rapid bone growth, the amount of bone made in kids is roughly the same as the amount of bone lost over the thirty-year time span in adults between the ages of 50 to 80.

In addition, there is repeated evidence that strongly indicates increasing peak bone mass by 10 percent during childhood will delay osteoporosis (thinning of bones) by 13 years later in life. Unfortunately, three of the main factors that have the greatest influence on bone mass are out of our control: age, gender and genetics. However, there are external factors—physical activity, diet, hormones, and bone-building nutrients such as calcium and vitamins D and K—that are critically important to bone health throughout life, and are also highly attainable.

## EXERCISE

Exercise affects the strength of the bones in two ways. First, in response to the pressure of what we call “weight bearing exercise,” like walking, jogging, jumping, yoga, Pilates, tennis, golfing, martial arts, team sports, or moving your body on the floor/ground to accelerate the heart rate, and second in response to the stress exerted by muscle contraction. The amount of exercise recommended for maximum benefit is 30-plus minutes, four days per week.

On average, children and certainly adults with higher bone mineral density sustain fewer fractures. Getting kids and adults away from electronics and playing outside doing different types of activities that

move the body on the ground is highly effective at building and preserving bone density.

## WEIGHT BEARING EXERCISE

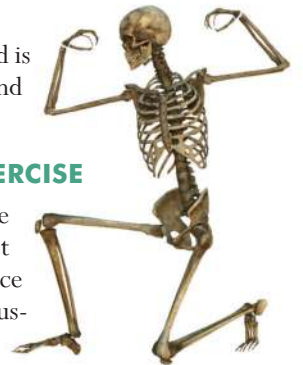
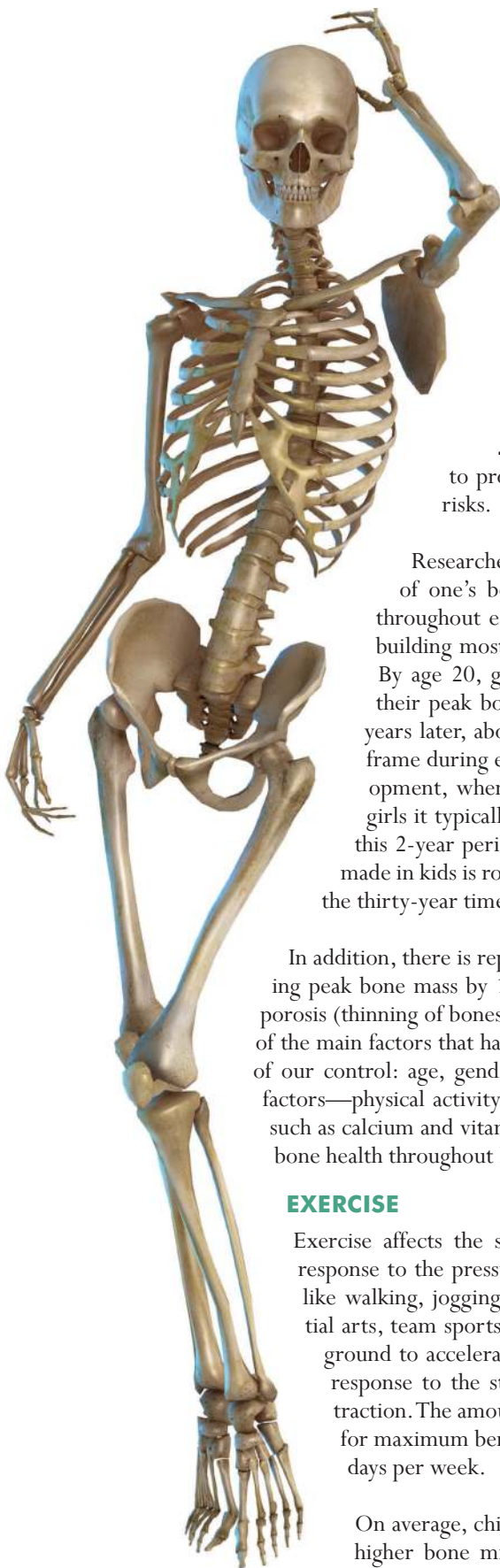
Weight bearing exercise is the most effective remedy against osteoporosis. The resistance places tension on your muscles, which stimulates your bones to create fresh, new bone. The muscles you build will not only support your balance, but put constant pressure on your bones. Walking lunges help by placing more pressure on your hips without having to do weight lifting exercises.

## FOODS FOR OPTIMAL BONE HEALTH

In place of soda or soft drinks, drink vegetable juice, coconut water, milk, green tea or water. Instead of doughnuts and packaged cookies, eat fruit, desserts low in sugar, frozen yogurt, Greek yogurt or homemade high-fiber, low-sugar muffins (there are excellent high fiber, gluten free muffin recipes that help support bones). Consider replacing trans-fats and saturated fats with polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats by eating avocados, olives, nuts and fatty fish. A well-balanced diet with at least six servings of veggies and fruits per day is ideal; focus on sulfur-rich veggies such as kale, broccoli and cabbage.

You also need protein, magnesium, potassium, phosphorous, zinc, manganese, boron, and vitamins B12, C and K—which is why you need nutrient-dense foods.

Besides including nutrient dense foods in your diet, it is especially important to get enough protein, because protein makes up 50 percent of the volume of bone. With protein-rich foods, include enough calcium and alkalizing fruits and vegetables to balance out the full support for bone health.



## VITAMIN AND MINERAL SUPPLEMENTATION

Consume calcium-rich foods like dairy (organically produced is optimal), leafy green vegetables, citrus fruits, carob and sesame seeds. Also consume magnesium rich foods like whole grains, fish, nuts, seeds, spinach and soya beans. The biological role of vitamin K2 is to help transfer calcium from soft tissue to places where it is needed the most—bones and teeth. Choose animal products such as eggs, butter, cheese (gouda and brie), meats, fermented foods such as soya beans, or vegetables, cabbage, spinach, bok choy, and broccoli. Vitamin D is important to insure that calcium is properly absorbed in the intestines. Most people need a minimum of 2,000 IU daily of Vitamin D3.

## HORMONE HEALTH

Balancing and replenishing declining hormones as men and women age is a powerful support to the health of the bones. It is imperative that bone health be supported by optimal hormone health. Early menopause, or andropause for men, substantially increases the risk of early bone loss. Checking hormone levels as men and women age, while providing a safe and balanced treatment plan, is optimal for prevention of muscle and bone loss and overall wellbeing.

## OTHER THINGS TO AVOID

Smoking and excessive drinking—they impair calcium absorption and inhibit the growth of bone building cells

Bone robbing drugs—corticosteroids (prednisone), anti-seizure medications, chemotherapy

Over-dieting

Antacids that contain aluminum, which can interfere with calcium absorption if you take too much

Chronic kidney, liver or lung disease

Inflammatory bowel or poor absorption, preventing the absorption of bone nutrients

Repetitive life stress

## THE BARE BONES OF IT ALL...

Although it's particularly important to take steps to build strong and healthy bones during childhood and adolescence, there are many lifestyle choices you can practice during adulthood to protect bone health, too.

Here's to the health of your bones! 🐾

JUST ASK NISH Nisha Jackson, PhD, MS, WHCNP, HHP, is a Southern Oregon gynecological practitioner with a master's degree in nursing and a doctorate in healthcare management. She is a licensed holistic health care practitioner, an author, a certified hormone expert and host of a weekly live radio wellness program.

### Nisha Jackson PhD, MS, WHCNP, HHP

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