

Maintain or Increase Bone Density With Exercise

A lifelong change for osteopenia or osteoporosis

For the health conscious, there are medical tests that we routinely schedule, such as our yearly physical. Because we are symptom free and hear so little about it, many of us remain ignorant about a vital health check – our bone density.

Osteoporosis is often called a silent disease because you can't feel your bones getting weaker. It happens when you lose too much bone; make too little bone or both. As a result, your bones become weak and may break from a minor fall or, in serious cases, even from simple actions, like sneezing or bumping into furniture.

Broken bones due to osteoporosis are most likely to occur in the hip, spine and wrist. Broken bones can cause severe pain that may not go away, cause you to lose height, and affect proper posture. Overall, it can impact your mobility and doing the things you enjoy in life, leading to other physical and mental health problems.

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Your Bones

The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends all women aged 65 and over, as well as women and men after age 50 who experience fractures, get a bone density test. They also suggest that younger women who have gone through menopause and have one or more risk factors get tested.

Some risk factors include; family history of the disease, having a small, thin frame, certain medical conditions and some medications. Lifestyle factors such as little exercise and poor nutrition also contribute. Unfortunately, the “silence” of the disease leaves many women unaware that they have low bone density.

A bone density test will tell you if you have normal bone mass, lower than normal bone mass, or could determine you have osteoporosis.

Low Bone Density? So, Now What?

Your medical professional will interpret your results and work with you on next steps. They may suggest a number of actions, to include medication, increasing both calcium and vitamin D, and urging you to exercise.

An Integrated Exercise Program

To support your bones, the National Academy of Sports Medicine (ACSM) suggests an integrated program including various modes that can help rebuild bone and reduce the likelihood of fractures.

Bones—like muscles—respond to the stresses placed on them. As you strengthen your muscles with exercise you strengthen your bones as well. Studies have shown that physically active women have higher bone mass than inactive women and that physically active persons experience fewer fractures even if they have osteoporosis. Engaging in physical activity can increase your bone mass and can prevent falls. While bone health is certainly a strong indicator of a person's fracture risk, falling may be an equally important risk factor for fracture.



Exercise needs to be regular and life-long.

Weight Bearing Cardiovascular Conditioning

Walking, jogging and dancing are preferable to swimming or biking. The intensity of an activity must be heightened to place appropriate forces on your bones. This form of exercise works directly on the bones in your legs, hips and lower spine to slow mineral loss and also provides cardiovascular benefits.

Strengthening exercises

Working with free weights, weight machines and resistance bands support bone strength, especially the muscles and bones in your arms and upper spine. To stimulate bone growth it is key to lift enough weight. Think, fewer repetitions, heavier weights. Strength training has an effect on bone because skeletal muscles are attached to your bones. As you get stronger during strength training your stronger muscles give a harder pull on your bones when they contract stimulating the bone building cells, osteoblasts, to increase their activity.

Stretching, Flexibility and Posture

Focus on lengthening tight muscle to promote proper spinal mechanics and posture. Muscles that are commonly tight include those you use

to arch your back, raise and rotate your shoulders, lift your knees and pull your feet toward your body. Exercises that gently stretch and extend your upper back, strengthen the muscles between your shoulder blades, improve posture and help to reduce harmful stress on your bones and maintain bone density. Being able to move your joints through their full range of motion helps you maintain good balance and prevent muscle injury. Tight chest muscles contribute to poor posture. Tight hip flexors at the top of your thigh make it harder to fully straighten up and stand tall. Stiff ankles reduce your agility.

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Stability and Balance

Focusing on stability and balance to help your muscles work together to keep your body stable make you less likely to fall. Practice being quick on your feet. Dancing and stepping in different directions helps create the quicker reactions and muscle memory needed to catch yourself if you trip or get caught off balance.

Exercise and Movements to Avoid

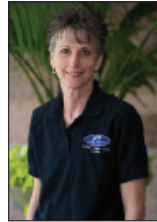
High Impact exercises: jumping, running or jogging can lead to fractures. Choose slow and controlled movements.

Bending and twisting: bending forward or twisting at the waist increases your risk of compression fractures in your spine. You may also need to be cautious of golf, tennis and some yoga poses.

Twisting to the point of strain or in combination with any forward bending. Avoid deep side bends.

Bending utilizing your legs and knees for support, keeping a neutral spine, not using your back.

Everyone with low bone density or osteoporosis should engage in a safe, effective personal and life long exercise program. It is important that you consult your doctor before beginning any exercise program. An exercise professional can prescribe the appropriate exercises for you based on your medical history, fitness level, and the activities you enjoy. At Fitness Together Tysons, we have experienced trainers that can help you or your loved one rebuild bone mass; call us at 703-289-9909 for a complimentary fitness consultation.



Lynn Ortiz is a Certified Personal Trainer and Director of Operations at Fitness Together Tysons. Lynn's passion for fitness began with her own personal success story when she lost 45 pounds and half her body fat over 7 years ago. The impact this had on her life instilled the passion in her to change careers and pursue this work. She became a certified personal trainer and continued to pursue education in the field by becoming a Certified Holistic Health Counselor, a Corrective Exercise Specialist and a certified trainer with the Senior Fitness Association.

She has a special passion for working with the baby boomer population as they work to keep themselves healthy through exercise enabling them to maintain their energy and mobility and to enjoy life.

When she's not in the Studio, Lynn enjoys spending time at home with her husband, Dennis. They have one grown daughter and two grandchildren. Her other interests include continuing to gain additional credentials in the fitness industry, her cats, cooking and reading.

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