



# Build a strong foundation

**A**ny worthwhile project begins with a good foundation. When the project is a healthy body, the foundation is your bones.

Unlike beams and girders, though, bones are constantly changing. And whether they get weaker or stronger depends in large part on how you take care of them.

## Step up to strong bones

Bone is living tissue, and it breaks down and is replaced on a daily basis. This process, known as bone remodeling, keeps bones strong and resilient.

But with age, the balance gradually shifts and more bone is lost than replaced. Eventually this can lead to osteoporosis—brittle, porous bones that break easily.

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF), 10 million people in the U.S. have osteoporosis. Many are older women, since the drop in estrogen after menopause can

often lead to bone loss.

Although some bone loss is inevitable, everyone can take steps to keep their bones healthy for as long as possible.

Follow this advice from the NOF:

### Get enough calcium and vitamin D.

Calcium is the building block of bone, and vitamin D helps your body absorb it. You can get these nutrients in low-fat dairy products, fish, and other foods. And, sunlight on the skin triggers vitamin D production—around 10 to 15 minutes of sun twice weekly is plenty for most adults.

### Eat right.

Studies show that a diet high in saturated fat and sodium can deplete bone minerals.

Stick with a balanced diet that includes lean meats, low-fat or nonfat dairy products, and plenty of fruits and vegetables.

**Stay active.** Weight-bearing exercise, such as walking and jogging, is especially important.

**Don't smoke.** Nicotine and other chemicals in tobacco smoke are toxic to bone cells.

**Avoid alcohol.** Alcohol can reduce bone formation. It also makes you more likely to fall, which can lead to fractures.

### Ask your doctor about having a bone density test for osteoporosis.

Women age 65 and older and people with other osteoporosis risks, such as certain diseases and drug therapies, should have this painless test.

### Partner with your doctor.

He or she can advise you about how much calcium and vitamin D

**Weight-bearing exercise, such as walking, can keep bones strong.**

you need and whether you should take a calcium supplement. Your doctor can also help you stay on track with other prevention and treatment strategies.

For more information about osteoporosis, log in to *Blue Access for Members* and search the *Healthwise Knowledgebase* within *Personal Health Manager*.