

Building and Keeping Strong Bones: Exercise to Maintain Strong Bones

What kind of exercise should I get to help build my bones?

Weight bearing (walking, jogging, dancing, skiing, etc.) and resistive exercises (weight training, and vigorous water exercises) are effective forms of exercise for purposes of increasing bone mass.

GOAL: 30-40 minutes of weight bearing exercise 3 to 4 times a week

- Exercise is site specific. For example, if the wrist is exercised the bone density in the wrist will increase but not in other parts of the body.
- If exercise ceases, bone mass will be lost.
- Bone must be overloaded for exercise to be effective. That means the exercise must provide loads greater than those to which the body is used to.
- The most effective resistance training is done with high loads and low repetitions. Doing ten repeats with a heavy weight is better than 50 reps with a lighter weight.
- For persons very inactive at baseline, even non-weight bearing exercises may help.
- If you are out of shape check with your doctor first and think about working with a trainer or physical therapist to start.
- Persons with established osteoporosis should AVOID spinal flexion exercises (forward bending) and be encouraged to do spinal extension exercises. An exercise plan for anyone with established osteoporosis should be supervised by a health professional.

Compiled by Mary Laya, MD, MPH, Associate Professor, Department of Medicine/Division of General Internal Medicine, University of Washington Medical Center.

Developed by the University of Washington's Center of Excellence in Women's Health and the Medical Center Patient and Family Education Services. <http://www.uwwomenshealth.org/>