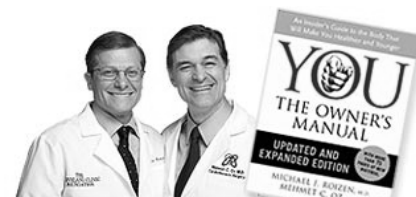


Beyond Calcium: What Your Bones Really Need

By, Dr. Michael F. Roizen



Are you careful about getting enough calcium and vitamin D to keep your bones young and strong? “Enough,” by the way, means 1,500 mg of calcium and 1,000 IU of D (1,200 IU if you’re a woman over 65) every day. Do you get that much? Fab-YOU-lous. Just don’t stop there. There are at least five other nutrients you need for a sturdy skeleton. Yes, we mean YOU! Currently, a whopping 10 million Americans and 2 million Canadians have osteoporosis, the debilitating “brittle bone” disease. The higher percentage of Canadians probably reflects the lesser power of the sun to convert inactive vitamin D to active as you travel north -- and that form of the vitamin is essential for the incorporation of calcium into bone. And guys, you’re not in the clear: Men make up 20% of all osteoporosis cases. Don’t want to be part of these statistics? Here’s what to eat enough of:

Protein-Your bones may seem a bit dull, but they’re actually super-busy, constantly breaking down and rebuilding themselves. One key nutrient your body needs to rebuild them is protein -- in fact, 22% of bone is made of it. **Your daily dose:** One-half gram of protein for every pound you weigh. But don’t go to extremes. A protein-heavy diet makes your blood more acidic. To neutralize that acid, your body steals calcium from your bones and dumps it into your bloodstream, but your bones end up paying the price. Get it from: Low-fat dairy products (they’re full of calcium, too), skinless white meat poultry, fish, tofu, and beans.

Potassium -Found mainly in fruits and vegetables, potassium also neutralizes acid. No wonder studies have found that people who eat lots of potassium-rich foods have stronger skeletons. **Your daily dose:** 4,700 mg from food (potassium supplements can be dangerous for your heart so don’t take one without speaking with your doc first). **Get it from:** Bananas, oranges, baked potatoes, plums, raisins, and tomatoes.

Vitamin K -Bone-building proteins with sci-fi-sounding names like matrix Gla protein, osteocalcin, and protein S all need vitamin K to do their job. Run low on K, and your risk of a fractured hip jumps by 30%. **Your daily dose:** 90 mcg for women, 120 mcg for men. **Get it from:** Leafy greens including broccoli, spinach, kale, and even parsley.

Vitamin B12 -In 2008, a major study found that people who were low on B12 lost more bone than people with robust levels of this B vitamin. Found only in fish and animal foods, B12 helps keep bones in tiptop shape by controlling the amount of homocysteine in your blood. That’s a good thing, since homocysteine has been linked to hip fractures . . . and heart disease, too. **Your daily dose:** 2.4 mcg **Get it from:** Fish, shellfish, lean beef, and low-fat dairy. If you’re over 50, consider a supplement; B12 absorption decreases with age.

Magnesium-Women with osteoporosis are often seriously short on magnesium, which makes up 1% of the minerals in bone. That may sound piddlin’ but if you don’t have enough magnesium, bone crystals enlarge, making your bones more brittle and prone to fractures. **Your daily dose:** 400 mg. Fringe benefit of taking a supplement: Magnesium also helps prevent constipation, which calcium supplements can cause. **Get it from:** Whole-grain cereals, brown rice, almonds, peanuts, and spinach.

Loading up on healthy foods is key for a strong skeleton, but you may need to limit some others that can actually cause you to lose bone: Caffeine, Sodium, Cola (in addition to caffeine, compounds in cola extract or phosphoric acid may be responsible) Vitamin A supplements exceeding 2,500 mg (don’t worry about vitamin A from foods; you can’t get too much of it) Excess alcohol (while moderate amounts of alcohol have been linked to healthy bones, too much can weaken them). One more piece of skeleton-saving advice: In addition to eating a healthy diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, don’t forget a side of regular weight-bearing exercise. It will help you look, be, and feel younger.

*You can watch the all new Dr Oz show on a TV station in your area (it started Sept 14th, 2009) to gain more insights...
Remember, beauty doesn’t as much reflect our vanity as much as it does our humanity and our health.
So stay tuned for more tips on Staying Young, and on being more beautiful.*

About the author: **Michael F. Roizen, M.D.**, is a professor of anesthesiology and internal medicine, Chief Wellness Officer, and chair of the Wellness Institute at the Cleveland Clinic. Dr Roizen can be heard on over 30 radio stations Saturdays from 5 to 7 pm. For a listing just email a request to YouDocs@gmail.com

NOTE: You should NOT take this as medical advice. This article is of the opinion of its author. Before you do anything, please consult with your doctor.