



integrated working

Keeping Bones Strong

It is important to take every opportunity to keep bones healthy and strong, especially if your patient may be at risk of falling. This can be achieved in a variety of ways from eating a healthy diet to taking exercise that increases bone strength e.g. walking.

Bone is a living tissue which is constantly building new bone and breaking down old bone. We make bone, building up the strength in our bones up until our mid 20's. From our 40's onwards our bone begins to break down and bones can lose their density.

There are many things that people can do to build and maintain strong bones. Genetic make-up will determine some of bone strength but life-style factors can influence a person's bone density.

Advice for patients to help keep bones healthy:

1. Try to eat a healthy and well balanced diet from the four main food groups:
 - Bread and cereals
 - Fruit and vegetables
 - Milk and dairy products
 - Meat, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds

Calcium is vital for strong teeth and bones because it gives strength and rigidity. The best sources of calcium are milk, yogurt, cheese, oily fish and green leafy vegetables.

Vitamin D is also essential as it helps our bodies absorb the calcium we eat, however we can only get 10% from our diet. The best source of vitamin D is from the sunlight. It is recommended that during spring and summer we take 15 – 20 minutes of sunlight onto our hands, arms and faces every day for adequate absorption of vitamin D.

2. Bones need regular exercise to maintain their strength. Brisk walking, dancing, skipping, resistance training, line dancing, gardening can all help with this. If a patient has osteoporosis and is at risk of breaking bones, they may need to be careful of vigorous, high impact exercise and forward bending (touching your toes).
For further information on Exercise and Osteoporosis – www.nos.org.uk
3. Advise patients to try to stop smoking and taking alcohol in excess. Smoking is toxic to bone and can affect bone strength. Drinking too much alcohol is also damaging to bone turn over and will increase the risk of fractures. The Food Standards Agency recommends that the daily upper limit is 2 or 3 units for women and 3 to 4 units for men (1 unit = one small glass of wine (125ml) or half a pint of beer or cider (300ml)).

For assistance in giving up smoking contact: www.livewellsuffolk.org.uk

For more information, download “Healthy Living for Strong Bones” from www.nos.org.