

Exercise for strong bones.

Osteoporosis is a condition where bones lose their strength and are more likely to break. When this occurs it can sometimes lead to long-term difficulties. Women are much more likely to be affected by osteoporosis than men. Read on to learn more about how you can keep your bones healthy.



Why do I need strong bones?

It's estimated that every year in the UK there are more than 500,000 broken bones caused by osteoporosis, that's one every minute!

Women are more susceptible to osteoporosis because bone loss becomes more rapid for several years after the menopause, when sex hormone levels decrease.

In addition, women tend to have smaller bones than men and in general live longer, with loss of bone tissue continuing for longer, making fractures more likely.

The way we live our lives can play an important role in determining the strength of our bones. One way to develop strength is by exercising.

Exercises to do

All forms of physical activity will help to keep your bones fit for purpose. The best exercises for building and maintaining strong bones are weight-bearing and muscle-strengthening activities.

Weight-bearing exercises are any activity performed standing up, such as walking, running and dancing. When your feet and legs support your weight, your bones have to work harder, making them stronger. Muscle-strengthening exercises are any activity that requires your muscles to work harder than normal, like lifting weights. This type of resistance exercise works the tendons that attach muscle to bone, which in turn boosts bone strength.

Reduce the rate of natural bone loss that occurs from age 35 onwards

To do so, aim to do muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week, together with regular weight bearing activities such as:

- Brisk walking
- Moderate-resistance weightlifting
- Stair climbing
- Carrying or moving heavy loads such as groceries
- Exercising with resistance bands
- Heavy gardening, such as digging and shoveling
- Cross-training machines

Exercising with osteoporosis

If you have osteoporosis or fragile bones, regular physical activity can help to keep bones strong and reduce the risk of a fracture in the future.

Depending on your risk of fracture, you may need to avoid some types of high impact exercises. However, if you are otherwise fit and healthy and already enjoy regular exercise then you should be able to continue.

Check out the exercise resources on the National Osteoporosis Society website. Speak to your GP and ask if there is an exercise referral scheme in your area that caters for people with osteoporosis.

What else can I do?

Eating a healthy, well balanced diet that is rich in calcium will help to develop stronger bones. It's also advised that you develop other positive lifestyle habits such as not smoking and not drinking beyond the recommended safe drinking guidelines for alcohol.



The National Osteoporosis Society has a range of information:

www.nos.org.uk

0808 800 0035 (free helpline)