



Healthy Bones During the Teen Years

During adolescence, your bones are growing, getting thicker and stronger. If your diet is not good, your bones will not be able to reach their peak size. Your bones need enough calcium, Vitamin D, and other minerals to grow well. If you don't get enough of these nutrients during adolescence, your bones may not be as strong as you grow older.

Calcium is found mainly in milk and other dairy products. You should get about 1300 milligrams of calcium each day from your diet. These foods are the best sources of calcium:

300-350 milligrams of calcium each

1 cup (8 ounces) milk, fat free or 1% or Lact-Aid® milk

1 8-ounce container of yogurt with fruit

1 cup (8 ounces) Minute Maid® calcium-rich orange juice with Vitamin D

200-250 milligrams of calcium each

1 cup frozen low-fat yogurt (brands vary)

1 6-ounce container low-fat yogurt with fruit

1 slice (1 ounce) Swiss cheese

1 slice (1 ounce) cheddar cheese

3/4 cup Total® cereal

3 ounces tofu (varies with brand)

2 ounces sardines

3/4 cup cooked collard greens

1/2 cup low-fat cottage cheese

1 Nutri-Grain™ cereal bar

50-100 milligrams of calcium each

1/4 cup canned salmon

1/2 cup cooked kale or bok choy

1/2 cup cooked soybeans

1/2 cup regular cottage cheese

1 tablespoon parmesan cheese

1 orange

Those who can't drink milk or eat dairy products can still eat the foods listed above in bold print. If you are unable to eat about 1200 milligrams of calcium each day on a regular basis, you could consider taking a calcium supplement. Tums® (chewable tablets) are a safe, well-absorbed, and inexpensive source of calcium. Other supplements containing **calcium carbonate, calcium citrate, or calcium gluconate** are also good. The calcium in your diet plus your supplement should equal 1300 milligrams a day.

Vitamin D is necessary for your body to absorb the calcium needed by your bones. It is found in milk, eggs, and some fish, or is activated by sunlight shining on your skin. If you do not drink 3 to 4 cups of milk a day, chances are you are not getting enough Vitamin D in your diet. To get enough Vitamin D from the sun, you must expose your bare face and arms to the sun for 10 to 15 minutes three times a week. Sunscreen will block the sun from activating Vitamin D, so it is best to get this sunlight in the mornings or evenings. During the winter months, the sun is not strong enough, so you will need to drink enough milk or take a Vitamin D supplement of 400 IU **each day**. This can be found in multi-vitamins.

Exercising and eating a well balanced diet will also promote good bone health. Exercise can strengthen bone, especially weight bearing activities such as walking, playing basketball, and strength training. This includes most exercises except swimming and cycling.

Eating whole grain foods, green leafy vegetables, nuts, and seafood, which contain other bone strengthening nutrients, may also help. Drinks containing caffeine or phosphoric acid (like carbonated drinks) are not good choices because they cause your body to lose calcium. Eating a good diet with plenty of calcium and Vitamin D will help you have healthy bones for a long time to come.