

Nutrition News

Information for Older Adults

Developed by Colorado State University Extension
Department of Food Science & Human Nutrition

Why Should You Be Concerned About Falls?

As we age, we start to lose our balance and that makes us more prone to falling. Falling is dangerous for many reasons. One of those is the risk that comes with osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is common among older Americans, especially women. In fact, more than 10 million Americans older than 50 have the disease.

Osteoporosis is a condition during which your body takes calcium from your bones to perform other functions. When

your bones lose too much calcium, they become brittle and can easily break. If someone with osteoporosis falls, he or she will be more likely to break a bone such as a hip or a leg. Even those without osteoporosis could be at risk; 33 million Americans have low bone mass. People with low bone mass are already losing calcium from their bones, and so could also injure themselves.



Even if your bone density is high, falling can cause other injuries such as twisted ankles or knees, cuts, and bruises.

Here are some facts on falls from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment:

- Of the older adults who were injured from a fall at home, only 28% were discharged back home after hospitalization. Most needed ongoing care in a nursing facility.
- Nationally, traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are responsible for 50% of fall related deaths among older adults.
- 37% of hospitalized older adults with fall-related injuries had slipped, tripped, or stumbled on solid ground.

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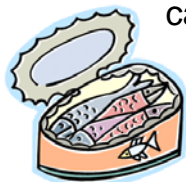
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Preventing Osteoporosis

One of the things you can do to prevent osteoporosis is to pay attention to your diet. Calcium is very important to eat, but so is vitamin D. Calcium needs vitamin D in order to work well within your body. Vitamin D helps calcium get into your cells and your bones, and the calcium is what strengthens your bones.

Foods with calcium include *fortified* dairy products such as milk, yogurt, ice cream, and *milk substitutes*. Other sources include spinach, soybeans, white beans, and canned sardines and salmon with the bones. The bones in the last two foods are soft and safe to eat.

Foods with vitamin D include dairy products that have been *fortified* with the vitamin. Many milk products and yogurts are *fortified*, and will say so on the package. You



can also buy calcium and vitamin D-*fortified* orange juice. Fatty fish such as salmon and sardines are also high in vitamin D. You can see that many of these good sources are also good for calcium!

Our bodies also make vitamin D from sunlight. Younger people can make most of the vitamin D that they need, but as we age our bodies lose some of their ability to make the vitamin. Also, being out in the sunlight for too long without sunscreen increases your skin cancer risk. Getting your vitamin D from food or supplements is the best idea.

Physical activity is also very important to prevent osteoporosis. Activity builds bone strength and structure, and this protects your bones when your body has to take calcium away from them.

If you already have osteoporosis, eating calcium and vitamin D and getting physical activity will help to keep the condition from worsening, so practice these strategies!

Are Supplements a Good Idea?

Whether to take a supplement for calcium and vitamin D is up to you, but because they are both so important, and because you must eat 3 or 4 servings of the foods mentioned above to get enough of both, you might want to consider taking a supplement.

Check to see if your multivitamin contains calcium, but make sure it has vitamin D as well. You can also buy vitamins that contain vitamin D alone, and you can buy calcium supplements as well. Your daily intake of vitamin D should be 400 International Units (IUs), but some researchers think 1,000 would be best, especially for older adults. Make sure that the label says “cholicalciferol.” This is the type of vitamin D that works best in your body.

Non-dairy Sources of Calcium and Vitamin D

If you do not eat lactose-rich foods, there are other good options for getting your vitamin D. Some brands of eggs are *fortified* with the vitamin. *Milk substitutes* are also often *fortified*, so your usual brand of soy or enriched rice milk might have vitamin D. Fatty fish also contain vitamin D. These include salmon and sardines.

Delicious Ways to Use *Milk Substitutes*

If you have never tried soymilk or rice milk (be sure to buy “enriched” rice milk), you might not believe it can be very tasty. Over the last 10 years or so, companies have made great improvements with these products. You can bake or cook with them, or drink them cold from a glass. They are delicious, and these milks come in many different flavors.

Some brands of soymilk have a chocolate flavor that would be good to have for dessert after a light meal. Eat an apple along with your milk to get some more vitamins and fiber from your snack. Most brands also offer a vanilla flavor that is great over cereal.

Soy milk or enriched rice milk last for up to 6 weeks when left unopened in the refrigerator. Once opened, it will last 7-10 days, but you can freeze the soy or rice milk in single serving containers and defrost when you're ready to use them.

Fitness Focus: Balancing for Fall Prevention



Now that you know more about the dangers of osteoporosis and ways to prevent it, take the time to improve your balance through physical activity. This will help protect you from falling in the first place.

Chair Balance:

- Stand facing the back of a sturdy chair. Keep your knees slightly bent and your toes pointed forward.
- Hold onto the chair back and bend your left knee to lift your left foot behind you. Hold this for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Repeat with your right knee.

Sitting Comfortable

- Now place the chair close to a table or counter so you can reach out for balance if needed.
- Go to the front of the chair, facing the table or counter.
- Sit in the chair slowly, and then quickly stand back up.
- Repeat this up to 10 times.
- As you get more advanced, try hovering your rear end right above the seat of the chair.

One Foot at a Time:

- Stand in front of a counter or sturdy table with your feet hip-width apart and your knees slightly bent.
- Carefully lift one foot off the floor. Hold for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Grab the counter or table if you start to lose your balance. Repeat with the other leg.

To help avoid falling, check your home for possible hazards. Look for rugs that could cause you to trip or slip, and ask for help to move furniture out of your walkway.

Ways to Build Bone Density



Your bone density will be affected by your diet, genetics, and physical activity. Protecting bone density is a great way to prevent osteoporosis, and to avoid broken bones if you fall. Here are some good bone density building moves:

1. **Walking:** activities with impact build your bone strength, and walking is easy on your joints.
2. **Weight training:** lifting light weights also strengthens your bones. If you don't have weights, try lifting soup cans above your head. Make sure to keep your stomach muscles tight and your back straight!
3. **Shallow water aerobics:** classes in the water that involve bouncing against the ground are great for building bone density. The impact of your bouncing strengthens your large leg bones, but because you're moving through water, you are less likely to suffer pain or injury.





Recipes

Breakfast *Parfait*

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

- 2 cups canned pineapple, chopped
- 1 cup thawed berries, frozen
- 1 cup low fat vanilla yogurt
- 1 peeled and sliced banana
- 1/3 cup raisins

Directions:

In glasses or bowls, layer pineapple, berries, yogurt, banana, and raisins.

Hooked on Salmon Sticks

Makes 8 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 can (14.75 ounces) drained pink salmon
- 1/2 cup crushed saltine crackers (about 16 crackers)
- 1 egg
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
- Nonstick cooking spray

Directions:

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine salmon, cracker crumbs and egg.
2. Divide mixture into 8 balls and shape into sticks about 4 inches long.
3. Lightly coat a skillet with cooking spray. Add oil and preheat the skillet on medium for 1 to 2 minutes. Add fish sticks and cook for 3 minutes.
4. Flip over and cook about 3 minutes or until golden brown.

Tips for the First-Time Cook

Here are some explanations for vocabulary within this newsletter. ***Look for these words in italics.***

Parfait: A *parfait* is a layered dish – usually a breakfast or dessert dish – with fruit and some type of dairy product. To make a *parfait*, layer some of the dairy (in this case, low fat vanilla yogurt) on the bottom of a tall glass. Follow this by a layer of fruit. You can mix all of the fruits together and then layer those, or you can make different layers with individual fruit. Keep layering the yogurt and fruit. Finish the *parfait* off with a layer of the yogurt.

Milk substitutes: *Milk substitutes* include products that mimic milk, but do not contain lactose, the sugar that causes allergic reactions in some people. Substitutes include things like soymilk or cheese, almond milk, and rice milk.

Fortified: Foods that are *fortified* have had a specific vitamin or mineral -- or a combination -- added to them in order to make them more healthful. In this case, milk substitutes are often *fortified* with calcium and vitamin D.

Senior Resource: Food Assistance

(formerly Food Stamps)

You might already know that Food Assistance (FA) tries to encourage eating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and non- or low-fat dairy. Food Assistance also encourages regular physical activity. So, FA contributes to an overall healthy lifestyle. Ask for more information at your local outreach office.