

Orthopaedic Connection

Exercise and Bone Health, Part II

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

You learned last week (I hope) that at approximately age 30 for most of us, it is downhill as far as bone strength is concerned. The reason is that the body has slowed down its manufacture of bone at about that age and then you begin to lose more than you gain. It's because bones are very dynamic and are constantly changing even though they seem hard and inert.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Use It

I have never been one to use the term "Use it or lose it". But it does have some application in what we are considering. Not all exercise is beneficial though.

Making It Worse

There are some facts that patients with osteoarthritis and osteoporosis must be aware. The spine and lower extremities are vulnerable to high impact movements.

The spine is particularly at risk of injury from:

- High impact movements
- Bending forward exercise (trunk flexion)
- Twisting at the waist
- Jumping and running
- Impact aerobics
- Sit ups, toe touches
- Rowing machines

Whatever exercises you choose you have to be especially careful about movements or conditions where you exercise that may increase your risk of falling. If you fall and injure yourself you are worse off than if you do nothing. Don't use this as a reason not to exercise. It can be done safely.

Keep reading.

Walking and More

If you have a balance problem, you can use a cane or wheeled walker.

I'm often asked about jogging and running. If you have no back trouble and no arthritis in your knees or hips – go right ahead. But I rarely see patients in my office who are middle age and beyond who don't have back, hip or knee trouble.

Jogging/running puts a huge extra load on knees and hips. Though jogging/running is great for building bone I don't recommend it for people with back, hip or knee problems.

Strengthening

Strengthening exercise strengthens bones the best if a sufficient load is placed on the bone.

It depends on your level of fitness. If you are able, you could lift higher weights with fewer reps. If exercise is new to you, resistance bands or exercising on a mat would work.

Strength training is site specific. The main goal of bone strengthening is preventing fractures. Where do fractures occur the most? Spine, hips and wrist.

Finally

As Winston Churchill said, “Don’t give up. Never, never, never give up.” If you don’t exercise I guarantee your bone health will deteriorate. Period. Do you want that? I didn’t think so.

Doing it entirely on your own is possible, but very difficult. A trained fitness instructor, trainer or physical therapist can get you started on the road to much improved bone health.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

I hope what you have read has raised questions. No problem!

Please log onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It has a huge amount of musculoskeletal information in the Website and the Archive of all previous GCH articles.

Check it out and be amazed what you can learn.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush