

Orthopaedic Connection

Girls And Young Women Need Weight Bearing Exercise

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

This week I am attempting to call your attention what girls and young women must do to stay healthy. *Not too many girls and young women are going to read this themselves. I am writing this for everyone who has a girl or young women in their family. Parents and Grandparents, you can give them a great gift by convincing them to do what is written here.*

Strong Bones

Strong bones can only result from using them. Everyone needs lifelong weight-bearing exercise to build and maintain healthy bones. *It is especially true for girls and young women.*

They absolutely must build their bone mass when they are young to decrease the risk of the dreaded osteoporosis later in life.

Osteoporosis is largely preventable if girls and young women get enough weight bearing exercise when they are young. As they age, staying very active and continuing other healthy habits maintain bone mass.

It's all about you. If you don't want to have osteoporotic fractures later – read on.

Bone Mass

The best time to build bone density is during the early years.

The maximum size of your bones is determined by genetics. You need weight-bearing exercise to reach peak bone mass. There is no substitute for weight-bearing exercise.

- Weight-bearing exercise during the teen years and early 20s is ideal.
- Bones can continue to strengthen during the 20s into the early 30s.
- Bone loss normally begins in the mid 30s.

Preventing Bone Loss

- Osteoporosis prevention is a special concern for females. Why?
- Women reach peak bone mass (density) at an earlier age than men.
- Peak bone mass is lower in women than men.
- Women undergo rapid bone loss after menopause.
- Bone strengthening hormone Estrogen levels drop dramatically after menopause.

What Is Weight-Bearing?

For the rest of your life you can help prevent osteoporosis by doing regular weight-bearing exercise. Fine, Doc, but what is it?

Weight-bearing describes any activity you do on your feet that works your bones and muscles against gravity.

Bone is living, changing tissue that is constantly breaking down and reforming. When you do regular weight-bearing exercise, your bones adapt to the impact of weight and the pull of muscles by building more bone cells and bones become stronger.

Recommended Activities

- Build up leg, hip and lower spine strength
- Brisk walking, jogging and hiking
- Yard work such as pushing a lawn mower
- Heavy gardening
- Team sports such as soccer, softball, basketball
- Dancing, step aerobics, stair climbing
- Tennis, other racquet sports
- Skiing, skating, karate

Weight training with machines or free weights is important in building strong bones in the upper body. Swimming and bicycling are not weight-bearing activities.

National guidelines recommend that we get at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise at least 5 times per week and in addition, twice a week weight training.

Regular Exercise

- Increases muscle strength
- Improves coordination and balance
- Leads to overall better health
- To sustain the bone strengthening benefit of weight-bearing activity you must maintain, even increase the intensity, duration and amount of stress applied to bones over time.

Parents, grandparents help your young women to become aware of the huge importance of what I am telling you.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.

Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

Attention! If my loyal readers want to be as smart as a tree full of owls they will fly to www.orthopodsurgeon.com for tons of musculoskeletal information everyone can use.

You get the Office Website and Library, Your Orthopaedic Connection and GCH archive of every article I have written for you.

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

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush