Without bones we wouldn’t be able to walk, play or even sit. Our amazing skeletal system has 206 bones that together enable us to do the simple things, without us giving it any thought. And, aside from this bony structure saving us from being just a blob of muscles, organs and skin - did you know that bones actually store minerals, produce blood cells and protect our internal organs?

In this edition we’ll answer all you need to know about keeping our bones healthy. We also take a close look at the importance of the sun vitamin - vitamin D - that’s received a lot of media attention as Aussies and New Zealanders are becoming increasingly deficient. It appears that we are all doing too good a job of slip, slop, slap that it’s actually starting to have negative impacts.

It’s not all environmental, with genetics proving to play a role in bone health. But, regardless if you scored when it comes to your bloodline, there are so many things we can do for bone loss prevention. So read on for some simple and practical ways to increase bone mass!

Happy eating
Vitamin D and Healthy Bones

With spring comes longer daylight hours and for many of us this is a healthier time of year - as we get off the couch and spend time outdoors being active or just lapping up the sun's rays.

The sun has had plenty of bad publicity over the years with important campaigns cautioning us about the risk of skin cancer. But we do need some exposure to sunlight – it is essential for our bodies to synthesise vitamin D. So, what exactly is vitamin D, are we getting enough and how much is too much?

1. **Osteoporosis in men**
   A common misconception is that osteoporosis is a disease that only affects women; however, approximately one in three men over the age of 65 years will suffer a fracture because of osteoporosis.

2. **Feel it in your bones**
   A healthy diet can do wonders to protect your bones. So what foods will really give you a bang for your buck when it comes to bone health?

3. **Jump for your bones**
   Weight bearing exercise is a term you may have heard of, particularly around getting stronger bones. So what is it?

4. **Maximising our peak bone mass**
   It is critical that in our adolescence and early 20's we do all we can to build our peak bone mass as high as possible because after our 20's our bone mass begins to slowly decline.

5. **Broccoli**
   Did you know that dark leafy vegetables including broccoli and collard greens are actually a source of calcium in our diets?
Asparagus with Wasabi Mayo
For an easy meal try this delicious dish as a side salad.

Length of Time:
20 mins Preparation
5 mins Cooking

Difficulty:
medium

Serves:
4

Roasted Beetroot, Feta and Rocket Salad
Try this salad at your next barbecue, your friends and family will love it.

Length of Time:
10 mins Preparation
45 mins Cooking

Difficulty:
easy

Serves:
8

Potatoes with Hollandaise Sauce
This recipe also works well as a side dish

Length of Time:
10 mins Preparation
25 mins Cooking

Difficulty:
easy

Serves:
4
Spring Veggie Pie
Perfect as a side dish or a main meal served with a fresh garden salad and potatoes.

10 mins Preparation
20 mins Cooking
easy Difficulty
4 Serves

Recipe of the Week
The Sanitarium Nutrition Service has a FREE Recipe of the Week email service.

Subscribe and once a week you will receive a scrumptious plant-based recipe that’s easy to whip up and is guaranteed to be a winner with family and friends. Our recipes also come with a nutrition profile and useful cooking tips.

The free Recipe of the Week email is great for solving the problem of ‘what’s for dinner?’ and perfect for cooking inspiration. So why not join up now?

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Osteoporosis in men

A common misconception is that osteoporosis is a disease that only affects women; however, approximately one in three men over the age of 65 years will suffer a fracture because of osteoporosis. And, men who suffer from osteoporotic hip fractures tend to have worse outcomes then females and are less likely to be given treatment to prevent further bone loss.

Bone loss in women starts earlier in life than men, 50 as opposed to 65, which is partially accountable for the low awareness of male osteoporosis. This delay is due to a relatively larger bone mass, so it takes longer to lose density.

Osteoporosis is commonly diagnosed with a bone density test – which is a simple and painless way of determining the strength of our bones. Although the exact reason for osteoporosis in men is not always understood some known underlying causes are smoking, alcohol abuse, hypogonadism (when the testes do not produce enough hormones) and some medications.

Smoking

It is evident that smoking has a detrimental effect on bone health with studies showing that smokers have increased bone loss compared to non-smokers. By the age of 80, smokers bone mineral density can be as much as 6% lower than non-smokers. The number of years that a person smoked seems to influence bone density more than the number of cigarettes a person smoked daily.

Alcohol

As little as three standard drinks a day can increase your risk of low bone density. Studies have shown that alcohol dependant people have a higher risk of developing low bone mass density. Researchers have hypothesised that alcohol has a direct influence on the cells that are responsible for bone formation, inhibiting them from building new bone.

Prescription Drugs

Glucocorticoid is a potent steroid that can be used to treat inflammatory conditions like arthritis, asthma, allergies and autoimmune diseases. If used for extended periods these drugs can cause rapid bone loss and increased risk of fractures by decreasing the rate at which the cells responsible for bone building work.
You can counteract the bone loss experienced by taking glucocorticoids by ensuring you have adequate sunshine, calcium and vitamin D in your diet and taking medications used to prevent osteoporosis. If you are worried about any medication you are taking, talk to your doctor.

**Hypogonadism**

Although a reduction in male sex hormones is a natural part of ageing, a rapid reduction – known as hypogonadism - can cause osteoporosis. This rapid reduction accelerates bone loss to a similar rate as seen in menopausal women. It may be caused by many factors including steroid use, or the taking of other medications including those used to treat prostate cancer. Testosterone therapy can be useful in preventing bone loss in men experiencing hypogonadism.

It is important to ensure you are aware of your bone health, so speak with your doctor if you have any concerns.
Feel it in your bones

Calcium is the most notorious “bone nutrient” – and for good reason. Its major role is to strengthen our bones and teeth.

However, other vitamins and minerals such as vitamin D, vitamin K, magnesium and potassium also have a role in healthy bones.

So here’s our top foods and accompanying nutrients for optimal bone health.

Milk is not the only source of calcium

While milk and dairy products are a convenient source of calcium for many people, they are not the only one and it is valuable to get your calcium from a range of sources. In fact, research suggests countries with low dairy consumption have a fifth of the incidence of hip fractures than high dairy consuming countries reinforcing that there are other factors at play.

Try: broccoli, collard greens, calcium fortified soy, oat, rice and almond products in conjunction with low-fat dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yoghurt.

Oil up

Very few foods naturally contain sources of vitamin D although fish such as salmon, tuna and mackerel are sources. Other sources include, eggs and fortified margarine. Vitamin D is important for bone health because it promotes calcium absorption in the gut and maintains levels in the blood.

Try: Combine the vitamin D in your diet with sunshine.

Opt for Soy

Soy foods contain isoflavones, which help prevent bone loss, stimulate new bone and increase bone mineral density.

Try: Tofu and edamame

Get Fresh

A wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables will provide an assortment of vitamins and minerals that promote bone health including magnesium, potassium and vitamin K.

Try: The fruits and veggies that are in season, they are tasty and cheaper!
Sow the seeds of good health

Nuts and seeds, particularly sesame seeds, chia seeds and almonds are sources of calcium, vitamin B and phosphorous.

**Try:** using tahini as a spread on wraps, or in dips, sauces and dressings.

Overall eating patterns actually predict bone health far better than individual nutrients. That’s why consuming whole foods – and enjoying the rich bounty of vitamins and minerals present within is always a good strategy. For some people, dietary supplements of calcium or vitamin D may be necessary; ask your doctor or dietitian for more advice.
**Jump for your bones**

Weight bearing exercise is a term you may have heard of, particularly around getting stronger bones. So what is it?

Weight bearing exercise refers to any exercise you do that works your muscles and bones against gravity, including walking, running and dancing. These actions stimulate your bones, encourage new bone cells to form and grow and improve bone density. And, this is not only essential for growing children – new bone growth can occur at any age, for both men and women.

Over the years, scientists have believed that any exercise was good for bones. This may not be the case. Swimming has been found to be good for lots of things, but not bones. Walking doesn’t grow much new bone and cycling might even cause bone loss. Even light weight training doesn’t do too much.

Recent research out of Sydney University has found that the most effective exercise for strengthening the bones in the leg, hip and lower back is jumping. What fun! Jumping up and down, side to side, forwards and backwards is easy and quick, but very effective in building new bone (but should be limited to 100 per week). If you’re not a fan of jumping, skipping and hopping are other options.

If you have a history of osteoporosis or a previous fracture, check with your doctor before starting these types of exercises.

For personalised advice around bone strengthening through exercise, have a chat to your local exercise physiologist.
Maximising our peak bone mass

Did you know that what you do in your teenage years can affect your bone health later in life?

Our bones are constantly being renewed, with old bone being removed by cells called osteoclasts and new bone being built by cells called osteoblasts. Up until our early 20’s this process favours bone development. At the end of this phase we have what is known as our peak bone mass – the highest level of bone mass that we are likely to have over our lifespan.

It is critical that in our adolescence and early 20’s we do all we can to build our peak bone mass as high as possible because after our 20’s our bone mass begins to slowly decline. In women this loss of bone mass accelerates after menopause. It is our bone mass that is a main determinant of if we are likely to suffer from osteoporosis or not.

Tips to maximise peak bone mass during adolescence

- Eat calcium-rich foods daily
- Get the recommended daily dose of vitamin D
- Exercise regularly. Weight-bearing activities such as running help build bone mass.
**Broccoli**
Did you know that dark leafy vegetables including broccoli and collard greens are actually a source of calcium in our diets?

Broccoli, part of the cabbage family, is originally from the North Mediterranean. In fact, it was initially known as “Italian Asparagus”. Today, there are three commonly grown types of broccoli, with the most familiar being Calbrese, named after Calabria in Italy.

One cup of broccoli contains around 45mg calcium. While this is much less than the calcium in a cup of dairy milk or soy, which has around 300mg, it is important to get your calcium from a range of sources. Interestingly, according to research the calcium in broccoli is highly absorbable, with research showing that more than 60% is absorbed in comparison to around 32% of the calcium in milk.

Aside from being a source of calcium, broccoli has the added benefits of being a source of dietary fibre, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin K, folate and potassium.

It is important if you are on warfarin medication that you are aware of the levels of vitamin K in the foods you eat. Suddenly having a meal high in vitamin K when you normally eat foods low in vitamin K, will result in a significant drop in your INR levels. Likewise suddenly eliminating vitamin K from your diet will result in increased INR levels. If you are having trouble regulating your INR levels please discuss your diet with your doctor.

**Tip:** To ensure you receive all the goodness available in this delicious veggie, make sure you only lightly steam rather than boil it.
Asparagus with Wasabi Mayo

Ingredients
- 2 bunches fresh asparagus
- 1-2 teaspoons wasabi
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise (store bought or homemade)
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 lemons, rind of
- 25 grams sliced almonds, toasted

Method
1. Wash and cut off the dry stalk end of the asparagus (about last 1cm). Get a bowl cold water ready to place the asparagus after boiling.
2. Place asparagus into boiling water and blanch for 2 minutes. Put asparagus straight into the bowl of cold water. This stop cooking process, helping to retain the bright green colour of the asparagus, drain.
3. Add desired amount of wasabi to mayonnaise. Add 1 teaspoon for a subtle wasabi flavour and 2 teaspoons for an intense
4. When you are just about ready to serve, warm the serving dish. Heat olive oil in a frying pan. Heat the asparagus through 2-3 minutes.
5. Place onto serving dish and grate over lemon rind. Drizzle with wasabi mayonnaise and sprinkle with toasted sliced almonds.

Tips
Serve hot or cold.

Nutritional Information
Per Serve
- Kilojoules 474 kJ
- Calories 113 Cal
- Protein 4 g
- Total fat 10 g
- Carbohydrate 2 g
- Sodium 21 mg
- Potassium 261 mg
Calcium 36 mg
Iron 0.7 mg
Fibre 2 g

Related recipes
Asparagus and Roast Sweet Potato Tart
Baby Potato, Asparagus and Almond Salad
Warm Cous Cous Salad with Vinaigrette-Dressing
Asparagus with Wasabi Mayo

- 20 minutes preparation
- 5 minutes cooking
- medium difficulty
- 4 serves

Ingredients

- 2 bunches fresh asparagus
- 1-2 teaspoons wasabi
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise (store bought or homemade)
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 lemons, rind of
- 25 grams sliced almonds, toasted

Method

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3. Add desired amount of wasabi to mayonnaise. Add 1 teaspoon for a subtle wasabi flavour and 2 teaspoons for an intense taste.
4. When you are just about ready to serve, warm the serving dish. Heat olive oil in a frying pan. Heat the asparagus through for 2-3 minutes.
5. Place onto serving dish and grate over lemon rind. Drizzle with wasabi mayonnaise and sprinkle with toasted sliced almonds.

Tips

Serve hot or cold.
Roasted Beetroot, Feta and Rocket Salad

- 10 minutes preparation
- 45 minutes cooking
- easy difficulty
- 8 serves

Ingredients

- 4 fresh beetroots
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 500g kumara, peeled and diced
- 200g rocket
- ½ cup coarsely chopped macadamia nuts
- 100g feta cheese, crumbled

Dressing

- 1 ½ tablespoons macadamia nut oil or rice bran oil
- 1 ½ tablespoons lite olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice

Method

1. Remove stem and leaves from beetroot and quarter unpeeled beetroots. Toss beetroot in half the oil and place on a lined baking tray in a moderately hot oven, 190°C, for 15 mins.
2. Toss kumara in remaining oil, place on a baking tray with beetroot and continue to bake for a further 30 minutes or until vegetables are tender. When beetroot is cool enough to handle, peel.
3. Toss rocket, beetroot, kumara, macadamia nuts and feta together in a large bowl. Combine dressing ingredients and gently fold through the salad.

Tips

- Add any other vegetables of your choice, baby spinach leaves or even fresh or roasted capsicum would make a great addition.
Potatoes with Hollandaise Sauce

- 10 minutes preparation
- 25 minutes cooking
- easy difficulty
- 4 serves

Ingredients

- 1 kilogram potatoes (small potatoes or cut larger ones into smaller pieces)
- 6-8 fresh mint leaves
- 300 grams green beans
- 4 eggs
- 1/4 teaspoon white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 60 grams hollandaise sauce (store bought or homemade)

Method

1. 1 Wash potatoes and place in salted, boiling water. Add mint and boil for 15-20 minutes or until tender.
2. 2 Place beans into boiling water for 3 minutes, then remove and place into ice water to stop cooking and retain colour, drain and put aside.
3. 3 When potatoes are just about cooked, bring a pot of water to the boil and add white vinegar. Once water is boiling, turn down to a simmer. Crack eggs right on top of the water so your hand is nearly touching. Cook for 1-2 minutes.
4. 4 Place the cooked potatoes onto serving dishes.
5. 5 Return beans to a hot pan seasoned with oil, salt and pepper, toss until warm then place on top of potatoes.
6. 6 Finish by adding the soft poached eggs on top of potatoes and drizzle with hollandaise sauce.

Tips

Use fresh asparagus instead of beans if in season.
Spring Veggie Pie

- 10 minutes preparation
- 20 minutes cooking
- easy difficulty
- 4 serves

Ingredients

- 1 carrot, peeled and grated
- 1 courgette, grated
- 330 grams can corn kernels
- A handful of baby spinach leaves
- 1/4 red capsicum, finely chopped
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 3 teaspoons oil
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1 teaspoon sweet chilli sauce (optional)
- 3/4 cup (100 grams) self raising flour
- 50 grams Edam cheese, grated
- Salt and pepper to season

Method

1. Preheat oven to 200°C and grease a 25cm flan/quiche dish.
2. Prepare vegetables: grate carrot and courgette, chop capsicum and onions finely.
3. Add vegetables and oil to beaten eggs and sweet chilli and mix together. Add flour, but do not over mix. Add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Place into prepared dish, sprinkle with grated cheese and bake in oven for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown.

Tips

- This recipe uses about 3 cups of raw vegetables; any seasonal veggies can be used.
- Served hot or cold - Great option for picnics and lunches.