

Exercising for Bone Health¹

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While the benefits of exercise for weight management and cardiovascular health are well known, its role in maintaining bone strength is often overlooked. Your bones are more than just a frame — they are living tissue that grows stronger when you move. When you stay active, your body responds by making your bones denser and better able to withstand the stress placed on them.

Physical inactivity can lead to bone deterioration, increasing the risk of fractures and reduced mobility, particularly among older adults (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, 2020).

This publication discusses the benefits of regular exercise for bone health and easy bone-strengthening exercises to help build and maintain healthy bones.



Figure 1. Activities that build bone strength can be simple, enjoyable, and comfortable for your body. Credit: © Paul Bradbury/Caia/Adobe Stock

Related Exercises for Bone Health

To improve bone health, it is important to incorporate a variety of exercises into your routine. Whether you are a lifetime mover or just getting started, always talk to your health care provider before beginning a new exercise program.

Weight-Bearing Exercises

Weight-bearing exercises are exercises that help stimulate bone growth and strengthen bones because they force

your body to support its own weight, making your bones work harder.

Weight-bearing activities include:

- Racket sports, such as badminton, ping pong, pickleball, and tennis
- Brisk walking (3–4 miles per hour)
- Climbing stairs
- Dancing
- Running

The current recommendation for weight-bearing exercise is to move for at least 30 minutes a day, most days a week.



Figure 2. Activities like pickleball help your body support its own weight.

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Resistance Training Exercises

Strength training or resistance training reduces the risk of osteoporosis and fractures because it increases bone density, improves muscle mass, and helps develop balance, helping to reduce fall risk.

Resistance exercises include:

- Free weights
- Resistance bands
- Weight machines
- Push-ups or pull-ups

Current recommendations for strength training exercises are to do 8 to 10 repetitions, 2 to 3 times per week.



Figure 3. If you can do your resistance exercises with ease, gradually add a bit more weight to continue to stimulate bone growth.

Credit: © Satjawat/Adobe Stock

Balance Training Exercises

Balance training exercises are especially important for older adults. They can help to improve balance and prevent falls.

- Lunges
- Single leg balance
- Weight shifts
- Bicep curls on one leg
- Tai chi



Figure 4. Just a few minutes of daily balance practice can make your body steadier and help prevent falls.

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Building Strong Bones for Life

Ideally, bone strengthening begins in childhood, and an active lifestyle continues throughout our lives. Exercise develops healthy bones, strengthens muscles, and improves balance and coordination. Choosing a combination of weight-bearing, strength training, and balance exercises helps strengthen your bones and muscles, which in turn prevents injury and bone loss and lessens your risk of falls. To learn the proper form for these and all exercises, take a class at your local YMCA or gym, or meet with a physical therapist, who can teach you balance, posture, and functional exercises. If you are not active, check in with your doctor. Make movement a daily priority in your life and invest in a stronger future for your body.

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