

Brittle bones: the role of dairy

Ask most teenagers and young women what they know about osteoporosis and they will probably answer, 'That's an old woman's disease!', thus implying that anything to do with bone health, building up healthy stores of calcium in the body for later use and drinking milk or having dairy products every day is not a priority for anyone who is not menopausal. After all, there is time enough to fix health problems when we get older.

This approach is flawed because bone mineral mass (the amount of healthy calcium-rich bone in your skeleton) is what determines fracture risk at any time of a person's life. Statistics show that up to 50% of all children and teenagers between the ages of 5 and 18 years will suffer from at least one bone fracture,³ if not more, during this period.

Researchers working as far afield as Switzerland and Canada³ have determined that to prevent fractures in adolescents and older people, it is essential to maximise 'bone mineral mass'.

Teens and young women who are constantly on diet are the first to incorrectly cut out dairy.⁵ Research has shown that replacing nutrient-dense milk with artificially sweetened, carbonated cold drinks put you at a higher risk for brittle bones.¹⁻³

The amount of bone deposited in your skeleton by the end of your growth period at the age of about 20 years,³ will determine if you will have strong bones for the rest of your life, or if you will be prone to bone fractures and osteoporosis for the rest of your life.

Factors that influence how much calcium you deposit in your bones include dietary intake of calcium, vitamin D and protein, genetics, gender, physical activity, hormones, and avoidance of smoking, alcohol and fizzy cold drinks.¹⁻³ From a dietary point of view, milk, yoghurt, cottage cheese and other types of cheese contain the most bioavailable calcium and high quality protein of any foods. '3 servings of dairy a day' is advice that we cannot ignore for the sake of our bone strength and health.

It's time that young people realised that they need to consume three servings of dairy every day and that by using fat-free or low-fat milk, yoghurt or cottage cheese they can obtain enough calcium and protein to build up that vital bone mineral mass without the fat or kilojoules. Ironically researchers have found that slimming diets that provide plenty of calcium from low-fat or fat-free dairy products, promote weight loss more efficiently, than slimming diets without calcium.⁴

Smart teenagers and young adults use at least 3 servings of low-fat or fat-free milk or dairy products a day and do plenty, but not excessive, weight-bearing exercise to develop peak bone mineral mass before they reach the age of 20 and in the process they also develop a healthy body.

3-A-DAY™ dairy for building and maintaining bone health.

You have a single window of opportunity which stretches from childhood through adolescence into young adulthood, to ensure that your body and your bones contain adequate stores of calcium and other minerals.³ So there is actually no time but the present to fix your bones!



For more information visit

www.rediscoverdairy.co.za

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An Initiative of the Consumer Education Project of Milk SA

References

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