

Tips to Keep Your Bones Healthy as You Age

As we grow older, our bodies start to lose bone mass faster than we can build it, making our bones thinner and weaker. This decrease in bone density makes our bones more likely to break (fracture), especially if we fall.

Fortunately, you can take action to prevent bone loss. The following nutrition and lifestyle tips can help you keep your bones healthy and strong.

NUTRITION TIPS

The foods we eat provide our bodies with vitamins, minerals, and nutrients to keep us healthy. The tips below show how certain foods and nutrients play an important role in the health of our bones. Too little or too much of these foods and nutrients can affect our bone density.

Tip 1. Eat foods high in calcium

Calcium is one of the building blocks of our bones. As we age, our bodies absorb calcium less effectively, so we need to consume higher amounts to maintain our bone density.

- Try to include some of the calcium-rich foods listed in table 1 in your daily diet.
- If you are not able to get enough calcium through diet alone, talk with your doctor about taking a calcium supplement.

Table 1. Foods Rich in Calcium

• Milk	• Beans
• Yogurt	• Tofu
• Cheese	• Nuts
• Kefir	• Fish (such as canned salmon with bones)
• Fortified plant-based drinks (such as rice, almond, or soy drinks)	• Leafy greens (such as bok choy, broccoli, or collard greens)
• Fortified orange juice	

Tip 2. Eat foods high in vitamin D

Vitamin D helps our bodies absorb calcium. One way we get vitamin D is through the foods we eat.

- Try to include some of the vitamin D-rich foods listed in table 2 in your daily diet.
- As many of us are not able to get enough vitamin D in our diet, Health Canada recommends all adults, over the age of 50, take a vitamin D supplement of 400 IU per day.

Table 2. Foods Rich in Vitamin D

• Milk	• Fatty Fish (such as salmon or sardines)
• Fortified plant-based drinks (such as rice, almond, or soy drinks)	• Margarine
• Fortified orange juice	• Egg yolks
	• Fortified yogurts

Tip 3. Eat a balanced diet

Eating a balanced diet described in Canada's Food Guide will help your body get all the nutrients it needs to support and maintain healthy bones.

Try to eat a variety of healthy foods in your diet every day, including:

- Vegetables, fruits, legumes (beans, peas, and lentils), nuts, seeds, and whole grains. These foods provide potassium, vitamin K, and magnesium, which help your body absorb and use calcium.
- Protein foods. Your body uses protein to build both bones and muscles. A balanced diet with enough protein can help keep your bones and muscles strong. Stronger bones reduce the risk of fractures, while stronger muscles reduce the risk of falling. See table 3 for good food sources of protein.

Table 3. Good Food Sources of Protein	
• Meat	• Legumes (beans, peas, lentils)
• Poultry (chicken, turkey)	• Eggs
• Fish	• Tofu
• Shellfish	• Nuts and seeds



For examples of healthy foods and recipes, visit Canada's Food Guide online at <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/food-guide-snapshot>.

Tip 4. Limit sodium

Sodium is a mineral found in many foods, including table salt. Too much sodium in your diet can cause your bones to lose calcium, reducing your bone density.

- Avoid using the salt shaker at the table.
- Limit the use of table salt when cooking.
- Consider using herbs and spices to add flavour to your meals instead of table salt.
- Reduce your intake of foods high in sodium, such as canned food, deli meats, condiments, and prepared and packaged foods.
- Use food labels to help you choose lower sodium foods. Choose foods that have less than 300 mg of sodium per serving. Aim for 2300 mg or less of sodium per day.

Nutrition Facts		Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 cup (250 mL)		pour 1 tasse (250 mL)	
Calories 130		% Daily Value* % valeur quotidienne	
Fat / Lipides 4 g			5 %
Saturated / saturés 0.5 g			3 %
+ Trans / trans 0 g			
Carbohydrate / Glucides 20 g			
Fibre / Fibres 1 g			4 %
Sugars / Sucres 4 g			4 %
Protein / Protéines 4 g			
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg			
Sodium 1060 mg			46 %
Potassium 300 mg			6 %
Calcium 50 mg			4 %
Iron / Fer 1.5 mg			8 %
*5% or less is a little , 15% or more is a lot			
*5% ou moins c'est peu , 15% or plus c'est beaucoup			

For more information, visit Sodium: Using the food labels at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/nutrients/sodium/using-the-food-labels.html>.

Tip 5. Limit caffeine

Too much caffeine can reduce your body's ability to absorb calcium from your diet, reducing your bone density.

- Aim for no more than 400 mg of caffeine per day. This is around 3 cups (1 cup = 250 mL) of brewed coffee per day.
- Caffeine is also found in colas, teas, energy drinks, chocolate, and some medicines.
- Decaffeinated coffees and teas have less caffeine per cup.

Tip 6. Limit Alcohol

Drinking alcohol can contribute to bone density loss by interfering with the balance of calcium and the production of vitamin D in the body. It also affects certain hormones that are involved in building and breaking down bones.

- If you drink, follow Canada's Low Risk Drinking Guidelines (See Table 4 below or read the full guidelines online at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/alcohol/low-risk-alcohol-drinking-guidelines.html>)

Table 4. Canada's Low Risk Drinking Guidelines

WOMEN	
0 to 2 standard drinks per day	No more than 10 standard drinks per week
	
MEN	
0 to 3 standard drinks per day	No more than 15 standard drinks per week
	

LIFESTYLE TIPS

In addition to the foods we eat, our lifestyle choices can impact our bones and overall health.

Tip 7. Do not smoke

Smoking at any age will increase your bone loss. This includes smoking cigarettes, cigars, marijuana, e-cigarettes (vaping), and other similar products.

Studies have shown that smoking reduces blood supply to bones, decreases our body's ability to absorb calcium from the diet, and affects certain cells and hormones that are involved in building bones.

If you would like help to quit smoking, the **Canadian Cancer Society Smokers' Helpline** is a free, confidential telephone service you can call for easy access to a trained Quit Coach. They can answer your questions about quitting, and refer you to services in your community. Speak to your doctor or other healthcare provider if you are interested in this program or contact

Smokers' Helpline: 1 (877) 513-5333

Tip 8. Stay active

Regular physical activity can help you build strong muscles and bones and improve your balance. Consider activities that include:

- Weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, hiking, low-impact aerobics, dancing, tennis, and golf.
- Resistance, such as lifting weights and push-ups.
- Stretching, such as yoga and tai chi.



If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

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