

# HEALTH UPDATE

## Building Strong Bones Gives Girls A Leg Up

(NAPSA)—What comes to mind when you hear about osteoporosis? You may think of older adults, because the disease primarily affects women after menopause. But did you know that girls can take steps now to develop healthy bones and reduce their risk of osteoporosis later? Since there is currently no cure for this crippling disease—which causes bones to lose density, become fragile, and break more easily—developing healthy bones early in life is key.

Building strong bones during childhood and adolescence can be the best protection against developing osteoporosis later in life. But because most women have built 98 percent of their bone mass by about age 20, it's important to learn bone-healthy habits early. Since bone mass generally decreases with age, resulting in weaker bones, the stronger girls' bones are to begin with, the better.

Girls can build strong bones by eating foods with calcium and doing plenty of weight-bearing physical activity. Most people know that dairy foods like milk, cheese, and yogurt, have calcium. But there are also many non-dairy foods with calcium, such as tofu made with calcium, almonds and vegetables like broccoli, kale and collards. Increasingly, foods like orange juice and some breakfast cereals are being fortified with added calcium.

Girls 9 to 18 years old need 1,300 milligrams of calcium each day. This may seem like a high number, but it's easy to reach that goal. For example, a glass of orange juice with added calcium (300 mg calcium) and a seven-inch waffle made with milk (191 mg calcium) for breakfast plus a fruit yogurt (315 mg calcium) at lunch adds up to 806 milligrams of calcium! Just 500 more milligrams of calcium for a snack and at dinner will add up to the recommended



**Girls can take the first steps toward preventing osteoporosis later in life.**

1,300 milligrams.

Participating in weight-bearing physical activity is another key way to strengthen bones. This means doing activities that make muscles and bones work against gravity. So, girls can build their bones by doing fun activities like playing soccer, basketball or tennis, or even by taking dance, karate, or tae kwon do classes. Push-ups, hopscotch, jogging and hiking are other fun weight-bearing activities that girls can do with family or friends. Not only is it fun for kids to participate in these activities, it can help build their self-confidence too.

Want to learn more? Look for additional great ideas for foods with calcium and fun weight-bearing physical activities at [www.cdc.gov/powerfulbones](http://www.cdc.gov/powerfulbones), part of the National Bone Health Campaign, "Powerful Bones. Powerful Girls," developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the National Osteoporosis Foundation.

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*Note to Editors: May is National Osteoporosis Prevention Month. Although this article can be used at any time, it would be of particular relevance during May.*