

Girls' Health

It's Never Too Early To Fight Osteoporosis

(NAPSA)—As girls get older, they tend to drink less and less milk—precisely when they need it most. The most important bone-building years, it turns out, are between ages 9 and 18.

Beginning at age 9, girls in particular need more calcium and vitamin D than when they were younger. By age 18, girls have built 90 percent of their bone mass.

Fortunately, you can help a girl build strong bones and take advantage of the benefits of dairy products—even if she doesn't like milk.

To help, here are tips from *Best Bones Forever!*, a program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health, to encourage girls and their BFFs (best friends forever) to get active and choose foods with calcium and vitamin D.

Find calcium in unexpected places. Did you know that a glass of calcium-fortified orange juice has the same amount of calcium as a glass of milk? You can find other sources of calcium at www.bestbonesforever.gov/parents/foods/foods_list.cfm. Plain yogurt, for example, has up to 450 milligrams of calcium per serving—that's more than milk.

Breakfast starts it off right. Eating breakfast can increase energy and boost brainpower—and can be a great time to get foods with calcium and vitamin D. In a recent poll on www.bestbonesforever.gov, more than 60 percent of girls said they primarily have milk when eating cereal.

You do make a difference! Parents who think that they no longer have an influence on their tween or teen daughters are wrong—the majority of adolescent girls cite parents as their biggest influence when it comes to nutrition.



Childhood and adolescence are the key windows of opportunity for building strong bones and warding off the disease of osteoporosis.

Get active. Physical activity is just as important for strong bones as foods with calcium and vitamin D. Your daughter needs 60 minutes of activity each day, so encourage her to get involved with an after-school activity such as soccer, gymnastics or tennis. Get active as a family by taking walks after dinner or playing basketball.

Sneak it in. Make a smoothie for a snack (try the recipe on this page), roll up string cheese in a fortified tortilla with salsa, prepare soups with low-fat or fat-free milk, and add bok choy and fortified tofu to a stir-fry.

Black and Blue Smoothie

- 2 cups blueberries**
- 1 cup low-fat or fat-free plain yogurt**
- 1 cup low-fat or fat-free milk**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 2 cups ice**

Mix ingredients in a blender for 1 minute.

Find recipes, learn ways to get active as a family and join the discussion with other parents at www.bestbonesforever.gov/parents.