

# Eating Guidelines for Osteoporosis

What is Osteoporosis?

"Osteo" means bone, and "porosis" means porous. When you have osteoporosis, your bones have become thin, weak and porous (like a sponge) instead of being strong and dense (like a brick). Because of this, your bones have a higher chance of breaking or fracturing, especially if you fall.

Osteoporosis is also called "the silent thief" because it slowly "steals" your bone density over many years without giving you any signs or symptoms. The good news is that you can take action to manage your osteoporosis.



## Steps you can take

Eat a healthy diet to keep your bones as strong as possible and lower your chances of breaking or fracturing a bone. Use "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide" [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide) to plan your meals and snacks and follow these 10 important steps.

1. Get enough calcium every day. Calcium is a mineral that helps to build and maintain strong bones and teeth. Aim for 1200 mg of calcium from food and supplements every day. Don't get more than 2000 mg of calcium from food and supplements per day.

The best food sources of calcium are:

- | Milk
- | Cheese
- | Yogurt
- | Fortified soy beverages.

Calcium-fortified orange juice, some vegetables, fruit, beans and meat

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alternatives also contain calcium. See the "Additional Resources" section for more information.

TIP: If you drink soy beverage, read the label and choose one that is "fortified". Shake the carton well before pouring to improve the amount of calcium that you get in each glass.

"What if I'm not getting enough calcium from food?"

Take a calcium supplement. The two most common types are calcium citrate and calcium carbonate. Calcium citrate supplements can be taken any time. Calcium carbonate supplements are better absorbed when taken with meals. Don't get more than 500-600 mg of calcium at a time from supplements.

Are you getting enough calcium? Find out with the calcium calculator?  
[www.osteoporosis.ca/index.php/ci\\_id/5355/la\\_id/1.htm](http://www.osteoporosis.ca/index.php/ci_id/5355/la_id/1.htm)

2. Get enough vitamin D every day. Vitamin D helps your body use and absorb calcium. Aim for a total of 800-2000 IU of vitamin D for the day. Fish, milk and egg yolks are the best food sources of vitamin D. For more information about food sources of Vitamin D see the additional resources section. For those over 50, take a vitamin D supplement of 400 IU or more every day to bring you up to the recommended level.

3. Get enough vitamin B12 every day. Vitamin B12 helps with bone formation. Older adults tend to have low levels of this vitamin. Aim to get 2.4 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin B12 every day from fortified foods or a supplement containing vitamin B12.

The best food sources of vitamin B12 are:

- | Eggs
- | Milk and milk products
- | Meat, fish, shellfish and poultry.

Some breakfast cereals, "veggie meats" and soy beverages are fortified

with vitamin B12. Check the food labels. Refer to Additional Resources section for more information.

4. Enjoy at least 7 servings of vegetables and fruit every day! Vegetable and fruit have potassium, magnesium and vitamin K which can help to keep your bones strong and healthy. Vitamin K may also help in preventing fractures. Fresh, frozen or canned - they're all nutritious choices.

<i>A serving of vegetables is...</i>	<i>A serving of fruit is...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  125 mL (½ cup) fresh, frozen or canned vegetables</li> <li>  125 mL (½ cup) cooked leafy vegetables</li> <li>  250 mL (1 cup) raw leafy vegetables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  1 fruit</li> <li>  125 mL (½ cup) fresh, frozen or canned fruit</li> <li>  125 mL (½ cup) 100% fruit juice</li> </ul>

5. Eat the right amount of protein. Protein, from animal or plant sources, is needed for proper bone health, but eating too much protein may increase the amount of calcium that your body loses. To get the right amount of protein, follow the recommended number of daily servings for the Meat and Alternatives food group in Canada's Food Guide.

6. Watch out for high sodium foods. Eating too much sodium can make bones less dense. Read food labels to keep your sodium intake to less than 2300 mg (equal 1 tsp of salt) a day. The Additional Resources section includes resources that can help you to choose low sodium foods.

7. Drink coffee in moderation. The recommended total amount of caffeine for a day is 400 milligrams. That's about four regular-sized (250 mL or 8 oz) cups of coffee a day. Any more than this can decrease the amount of calcium your body keeps.

Remember that colas and energy drinks also contain a lot of caffeine.

Regular tea contains much less caffeine than coffee. To see how much caffeine is in these beverages refer to the "Food Sources of Caffeine" handout in the Additional Resources section.

8. Enjoy your cup of tea. Green and black teas (regular and decaffeinated) contain natural plant compounds called polyphenols. These compounds seem to help keep bones strong especially in people who drink tea often. Don't forget that tea has caffeine and the recommended amount is up to 400 mg per day.

9. Drink alcohol sensibly. Drinking too much alcohol on a regular basis is a risk factor for fractures. Men should have no more than 3 drinks per day for men, and women no more than 2 drinks a day. One standard drink is:

- | 142 mL (5 oz) glass of 12% wine
- | 341 mL (12 oz) bottle of 5% beer, or
- | 43 mL (1 ½ oz) shot of 40% spirits

10. Keep active. Eating well and being active go hand in hand for good bone health. Weight bearing activities, such as walking and dancing, help build and maintain bone mass. Keep active by doing strength (such as lifting weights), flexibility (stretching) and endurance (such as swimming) activities too. See the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines in the Additional Resources section for ideas on how to get started and stay active.

### Special Considerations

- | Be careful not to fall. Fractures often happen after you have fallen down. Here are some tips from Osteoporosis Canada to help prevent falls:
  - | Wear low-heeled shoes that give good support.
  - | Take care of your feet. Painful feet may affect your balance.
  - | Watch for uneven ground, sidewalks and floors.
  - | Move things like rugs and cords that you could trip over.
  - | Be careful not to slip on spills or trip over your cat or dog.
  - | Keep the stairs in your house clear of any clutter.

- ┆ Avoid going outdoors if it is icy. If you really have to go out, wear ice grips on your boots for traction (the ice grips can be slippery indoors though, so don't forget to take them off once you get inside the mall or store).
- ┆ Put a rubber mat in the bathtub and use grab bars to help you get out of the tub.
- ┆ Talk to your pharmacist or doctor if you are taking medications. Some medicines can make you drowsy or feel faint which may result in a fall.
- ┆ Keep active! Strong muscles and good balance can reduce your chances of falling.
- ┆ If you've just had a fracture: During the first 6 months after your fracture:
  - ┆ Take extra care to make sure that you are getting enough calcium, vitamin D, vitamin B12, vegetables, fruit and protein.
  - ┆ Ask your health care provider if you need to take any extra supplements.
  - ┆ Continue to follow the 10 steps above.



## Additional Resources

- ┆ Visit the Osteoporosis Canada web site at [www.osteoporosis.ca](http://www.osteoporosis.ca) or call toll free 1-800-463-6842 or 416-696-2663.
- ┆ How Do I Know if I Need a Calcium Supplement?  
<http://www.osteoporosis.ca/osteoporosis-and-you/nutrition/supplements/>
- ┆ Public Health Agency of Canada, "Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living" <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pa-ap/index-eng.php>
- ┆ Additional fact sheets:
  - ┆ Food Sources of Calcium  
[www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?)

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- [Portal=RbCR&id=JMfrUAQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==](#)  
i Food Sources of Vitamin D  
[www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMfrUAQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==)  
[Portal=RbCR&id=JMfrUAQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==](#)
- [Portal=RbCR&id=JMbqWAI=&PreviewHandout=bA==](#)  
i Quick Nutrition Check for Protein  
[www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMbqWAI=&PreviewHandout=bA==)  
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i Low Sodium (Salt) Food Choices  
[www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMfqXQM=&PreviewHandout=bA==)  
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i Food Sources of Caffeine  
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