
Fitness Tips

by Cari Draft Elliott, BS, CPT - ACE-Certified Personal Trainer

What are the best exercises to prevent osteoporosis?

Question: *I'm having a hard time figuring out exactly what to do to increase bone strength -- it seems like all exercises work the muscles, not the bones. What are the best exercises to build bone strength and prevent osteoporosis?*

Answer: Exercise causes the greatest increase in bone strength when mechanical force is placed on the bones, so guess what: Weight-bearing activities like tai chi, walking, running and strength training (lifting weights) place more force on the bones than other activities like swimming or cycling.

While activities like cross-country skiing and an elliptical machine workout provide great cardiovascular stimulation, they don't have the same impact on bone strength as weight-bearing exercise. Lifting heavier weights causes more bone adaptation than lifting lighter weights. Running exerts greater force than walking, and jumping and skipping provide even more impact than running.

Are high-impact activities off-limits for you? You could simply increase your walking pace. If you can walk fast, try walking faster. Once you're used to walking faster, add a few steps of jogging. Take stairs faster or two at a time. Add heavier weights to your strength training workouts when you are able.

To build bone strength, you also have to consume enough calories, protein, vitamins and minerals. Fruits and vegetables provide good nutrients, getting the environment right for bone growth. Avoid smoking, limit alcohol, salt and empty calories and you'll be well on your way to building stronger bones!

Cari Draft Elliott is an ACE-Certified Personal Trainer who makes "house calls"! Please check out her website at www.oneononefitgirl.com and email your questions to cari@oneononefitgirl.com.
