

10 Foods for Building Strong Bones and Muscle

Eating right is about more than managing your weight. You've got to take in the right balance of nutrients, vitamins and minerals to keep all the systems in your body functioning properly, and to keep your bones and muscles strong and healthy.

In our weight-focused culture, it's easy to get so focused on the fat and calories in the food we eat that we fail to consider how a particular meal will affect the entire body. Do you know what nutrients were in your last meal? How will that meal help keep your body's structure strong?

Build strong bones

As we age, our bones become more brittle and muscles become weaker, but a nutritious diet now can help preserve bone and muscle strength. For strong bones, your body needs two key nutrients: calcium and vitamin D. Calcium is the mineral that strengthens bones and teeth, and vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium while improving bone growth.

Adults should get 1,000 milligrams of calcium and 200 international units (IUs) of vitamin D a day. If you're over 50, make that 1,200mg of calcium and 400 to 600 IUs of vitamin D daily.

While both calcium and vitamin D can be taken in supplements, it's best to get them through a natural diet. What foods should you be eating? Here are five of the best foods for healthy bones:

Yogurt. Most yogurts are fortified with vitamin D, and depending on the brand, you could get 30 percent of your daily calcium intake from yogurt.

Milk. Though it's a staple in kids' diets, many adults don't drink milk. An eight-ounce glass of fat-free milk will provide you with 30 percent of your daily dose of calcium. Buy milk fortified with vitamin D, and you'll get even more benefits.

Salmon and Tuna. Not only is it good for your heart, but salmon is also good for your bones! Just three ounces of sockeye salmon contains more than your full daily dose of vitamin D. Tuna is another great source of vitamin D, although it doesn't contain quite as much as salmon (just about 39 percent of your daily dose).

Spinach. Don't skip out on the greens, especially spinach. Just one cup of cooked spinach contains 25 percent of the daily recommended dose of calcium. It also contains plenty of fiber, iron and vitamin A. If

you just can't stomach spinach, make a fruit smoothie and add handful of fresh spinach. You'll never know it's there!

Fortified foods. Store-bought foods like orange juice and some cereals are fortified with vitamins and minerals like vitamin D and calcium. Just check the labels to be sure what you're buying will actually be beneficial to building strong bones.

Strengthen your muscles outside the gym

Strength-training workouts at the gym are great for building muscle strength and endurance, but your muscles also need proper nutrition or what you do in the gym won't matter much. Just like your bones need vitamin D and calcium, your muscles need protein to stay strong and healthy.

According to the CDC, women should get about 46 grams of protein each day, while men need about 56 grams daily. In general, 10 to 35 percent of your daily calories should come from protein. If you're trying to stay lean, the more protein the better. Protein builds muscle and muscle burns fat.

Five of the best sources of protein are:

Lean meats. A big, juicy steak may sound delicious, but if you're trying to get the most out of your meat, stick to chicken, pork and lean cuts of red meat.

Fish. Salmon is an excellent source of lean protein, and you'll get the dual benefit of strengthening both your bones and your muscles when you have salmon for dinner!

Greek yogurt. Greek yogurt doesn't contain the calcium and vitamin D that regular yogurt has in it, but it is packed full of protein. In fact, there are about 24 grams of protein in one cup of plain Greek yogurt! Keep the calorie count low by topping plain Greek yogurt with fresh fruit or nuts for some added flavor.

Eggs. A breakfast without eggs really isn't breakfast at all. And although you can cut calories by eating the whites only, the yolk is the source of everything that's good for you in eggs, including calcium and protein.

Nut butter. Peanut butter and almond butter are great when you need a protein-powered snack on the go. Slice up an apple and spread on your favorite nut butter for a simple, yet delicious, snack.

No matter how old you are, it's never too early to start focusing on eating right to keep your bones and muscles strong and healthy. By eating foods rich in calcium and vitamin D, you can help prevent osteoporosis, and protein will give you both strength and energy to enjoy life.

Article provided by North Surgical Center <http://www.northcentralsurgical.com/10-foods-building-strong-bones-muscles/>