
Living Strong: How Men May Maintain Bone Health and Prevent Falls

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As we grow older, we begin losing bone density and mass, which may make us more susceptible to bone-related conditions, including osteoporosis and injuries. Falls are a leading cause of injury among older adults, often resulting in fractures and other serious health issues according to the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

With many older adults wanting to live independently as long as possible, good overall health is crucial. Maintaining strong bones and preventing falls can help.

Osteoporosis is often called a ‘silent’ condition, according to the National Institute of Health (NIH), especially for men. Osteoporosis in men is often under-screened, underdiagnosed and undertreated. An estimated two million American men currently have osteoporosis and an additional 12 million are at risk for developing the disease, as reported by the NIH. It’s important that osteoporosis not be regarded as a primarily women’s disease.

Know Your Numbers – Up to one in four men over the age of 50 will break a bone due to osteoporosis. Men 75 and older might consider discussing the option of a bone density scan, also known as a DEXA scan, with their health care providers. Testosterone levels and other changes impact bone health. The bone scan measures the mineral content, particularly calcium, to determine bones’ density. Based on the results, providers may recommend treatments. This test is generally covered under Medicare and other health plans.

Understand Your Risks – While bone density naturally decreases over time, the amount, speed, and impact of loss may be slowed so take stock of what you eat and drink, and how much you exercise and move. Also, review your family’s health history to determine what health conditions may be hereditary. Be sure to share this with your physician.

Eat Right and Exercise – Consider including foods high in Vitamin D and calcium as part of a well-balanced diet. New to exercise? Start slowly and try exercises like beginner’s yoga; every extra movement may help you improve your strength. If you are already participating in a routine such as walking, jogging, and balance coordination exercises, consider adding weights to enhance your workout.

Make Your Surroundings Fall-Proof – Look around your home – inside and outside. Can you safely pass by tables, chairs, and other furniture? Are all the rugs and floorboards secure? Are there grab bars and handrails?

Are bare floors slippery, even when dry? What about outside your home? Are there holes, cracks, uneven spots? Address these obstacles and other worries to make your home safer inside and out.

Dress for Safety – In addition to ensuring clothes do not drag on the floor – a potential trip hazard, be mindful of what you are wearing on your feet. Wear rubber-soled shoes or sneakers, or slip-proof socks or slippers. Specifically designate these as “inside wear only” if you do not want to track the outside dirt and grime into the home.

Stay Aware – Maintaining your annual well visits may help address health issues and concerns early, including bone health. And if something seems not quite right, say something.

While we cannot prevent all injuries no matter how careful we are, maintaining strong bones, gaining strength, and improving balance may lessen the impact of a fall and speed recovery – even from other injuries. So, bone up on your health for a stronger future.

This information is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for the advice of a doctor. Consult your doctor prior to beginning an exercise program or making changes to your lifestyle or health care routine.