

# Beef Up Your Bones, While Being Gentle on Your Joints

Try these 3 strategies for better bone and joint health, no matter what your activity or sport.

The start of school brings a fresh round of sprains, strains, and fractures from youth sports as kids launch into new activities. But the fact is that these issues can affect people of all ages who are doing any type of exertion, from a new workout routine to everyday home maintenance tasks.

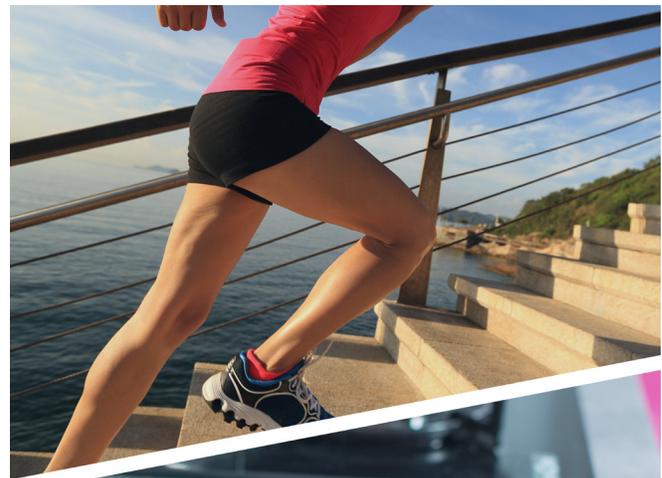
It doesn't matter if you're a competitive athlete, a fitness newbie, or a teen who's trying out a fresh sport—bone and joint health need to be considered as you step into new challenges. Knowing how to recover from injuries is important, but it's much better to prevent them in the first place, and your bones and joints are an ideal starting point.

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**Consider these strategies for building strength below those muscles, so you can keep your body on track for whatever you want to do:**

## 1. MIX UP YOUR TRAINING

One misstep that many people make is focusing on only one type of training, such as sticking to a single sport like running or hitting the elliptical every day. While cardiovascular conditioning is important, you have to blend low-impact and high-impact exercises for optimal bone and joint health.



Weight-bearing exercise like walking, climbing stairs, hiking and weight training forces you to work against gravity, and that helps to develop more bone density. Non-weight-bearing sports like bicycling or swimming is great for promoting circulation and blood flow, which is beneficial for your joints.

By putting together a mix and allowing yourself adequate recovery days, you'll be improving bone and joint health as well as boosting muscle strength, coordination, balance, and overall health.

## 2. CONSISTENCY BEATS INTENSITY

There are times when intense exercise feels great and brings fast results, which is why high intensity interval training (HIIT) is becoming so popular. Whether you choose to incorporate that type of workout into your mix or take on other exercise strategies, be sure that you're going for consistency and a long-term approach.

That means you'll want to start off slowly and have a goal. Allow time to stretch and warm up before every exercise session, and consider scheduling your workouts in advance so you're not loading up the weekend with exercise. Put rest days into your calendar as well, to remind yourself to build in that much-needed recuperation time.

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Injury prevention works best with a slow-and-steady approach, and you'll get the benefit of better bone and joint health as well. Weekend warriors who take on too much, too fast are the ones who tend to have chronic joint problems and bone issues because they're overexerting their systems. Instead, be consistent and patient and you'll see more progress with fewer injuries.

## 3. DON'T FORGET ABOUT NUTRITION

An important part of bone density and joint health is what you eat, not just how you move. If you're crushing it in the gym but crashing when it comes to nutrition, then your bones and joints won't get the benefits of your hard work.

A good starting point is to load up on vegetables and lean protein, and choose foods that are high in omega-3s because they help to reduce the kind of inflammation that can impact bone health. It's also a good idea to get your vitamin D and calcium levels checked to make sure you're on track with those nutrients.

Making an appointment with a nutritionist can be particularly helpful, since you'll want to tailor your eating based on a number of factors such as age, activity level, health conditions, and vitamin deficiencies.

By keeping these three tactics in mind as you get started on an exercise track—or amp up your activity to new levels—you'll be doing your bones and joints a huge favor. And they'll reward you with more resilience, greater strength, and far fewer injuries.

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