

# Are your bones at the breaking point?

52 million Americans have low bone mass (twice as many women as men, and most of them over 50) leaving them with thin, weak bones that are much easier to break than they should be. And it's a problem commonly found in young people with chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia or chronic pain.

In its early stages, the condition is called *osteopenia*. As it advances, it becomes an outright disease called *osteoporosis*.

The diagnosis for osteopenia or osteoporosis is usually made using DEXA (Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry), a test that measures bone mineral density (BMD) in the wrist and spine. If your BMD is 1-2.4 below the normal bone mass for healthy women or men in their twenties, then you have osteopenia. If it's 2.5 or lower, then you have osteoporosis.



Traditional medical treatment involves prescribing bisphosphonate drugs that increase BMD, like Fosamax, Boniva, Actonel and Zometa. If you've been diagnosed with osteoporosis, it's reasonable to take these. But they're not without significant risks and side effects. In fact, some research indicates that years of intake can actually make bones *more* brittle, increasing the risk of some types of fractures – especially if they are used for 5 years or more.

Natural approaches to promoting strong healthy bones can help ward off the possible onset of these serious bone issues. They're also safer and far less expensive than the medications you might otherwise end up needing.

Ready to bone up on natural bone health?

## Natural Ways to Optimize Bone Strength

### 1. Take strontium.

Strontium is probably the most effective bone-building mineral available. In studies on people with thin, weak bones, supplementing with strontium improved BMD (Bone Mineral Density) in the lower spine by 15% and decreased first-time fractures by 49%. It also reduced bone pain. That's 70% more effective than Fosamax, but without the toxicity or high cost. You should take strontium on an empty stomach (preferably at bedtime) and at a different time of day than calcium or vitamin D (both of which can block strontium absorption).

*My advice:* 340-680 mg daily of elemental strontium (680 mg builds bone twice as quickly as 340 mg). This is best combined with other bone-building nutrients, like vitamins D and K, magnesium, low dose calcium and boron. A simple approach is to take a supplement with all the other needed nutrients in the morning and the strontium at bedtime. In my opinion, the two best are:

- **OsteoStrong** (by EuroPharma), which has all of the key bone-building nutrients except strontium. (take 4 capsules in the morning), *OR*
- **Energy Revitalization System** vitamin powder, which also has all of the key nutrients for bone health except strontium.

Take either of the options above in the morning and add the 340-680 mg of strontium at bedtime. I recommend the **Strontium** supplement from EuroPharma.

*Caution:* Though natural products are usually very safe, every therapeutic agent has

certain risks:

- For strontium, that includes an increased risk of phlebitis (blood clots in the legs). So you shouldn't take this if you have a history of phlebitis. And if a rash occurs in the first eight weeks of use, stop taking it.
- Don't overdo the calcium. No doubt you've noticed that I'm not emphasizing calcium, supposedly the best mineral for building bones. Why not? First, there's a risk to your heart. An analysis of data from the massive Women's Health Initiative linked calcium supplements to a 31% increased risk of heart attacks. In another study, Swedish researchers showed that risk for fractures not only increased in those who consumed *below* 750 mg of calcium a day, but they also increased in those who consumed *above* 1,100 mg a day! So high doses of calcium may do you more harm than good!

*My advice:* Regularly eat calcium-rich foods like leafy greens, fatty fish with bones (sardines and salmon are good choices) and dairy products. Keep supplementation of calcium (including antacids) to a minimum – no more than 500-600 mg daily. If you take a calcium supplement, make sure it also includes magnesium and vitamin D.

## 2. Oil your bones.

Several studies show that adding fish oil essential fatty acids (EFAs) to your diet can improve bone density.

*My advice:* Add fish oil to your bone-building regimen if you have dry eyes, dry mouth or depression – all of which suggest a fish oil deficiency. I recommend the product **Vectomega** (from Europharma), 1 tablet a day. It's bioidentical and has the important EFAs without the unnecessary other fats, so 1-2 tablets a day replace 8-16 capsules of most fish oils, and at a much lower cost. Their formulation also avoids the "fish oil burps" of most other brands.

## 3. Take your bones for a walk.

*My advice:* Walk 30-60 minutes every day, preferably outdoors so you get your exercise while getting a dose of vitamin D enriching sunshine. To get the most sunshine benefit, skip the sunblock unless you're out long enough to sunburn. Remember: Avoid sunburn, not sunshine.

## 4. Optimize hormones.

In menopausal women, very low-dose transdermal (by patch) estrogen replacement therapy can improve bone density. In men, testosterone deficiency is a major cause of osteoporosis.

*My advice:* See a holistic physician experienced in bioidentical hormone therapy and find out if you need supplemental hormones.