

Maintain bones to retain members

Cardio Training

helping you maximise performance and minimise risk



Bone health is often neglected in today's exercising community, despite the fact that weight bearing activity is a key strategy for the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis. By understanding the issues surrounding bone development, your facility can integrate exercise programs and educational strategies to remind existing members as to why weight training (hopefully within your business!) is critical for optimal bone health. Additionally, by expanding your education strategy to the wider community, you can potentially attract new markets to your facility as well.

Bone is a living tissue. Don't be fooled by the 65 million-year-old dinosaur bones seen in books, museums, or on the TV. There is nothing permanent about living bone; like a muscle, it can grow and it can shrink and it is in a constant state of change. Unfortunately, the biggest change comes with age. As people get older their bones begin to deteriorate. Even as early as age forty, bones are no longer as strong as they once were, becoming thinner and weaker. Unchecked, this deterioration can be a contributing factor in developing osteoporosis, which in turn increases the risk of suffering a fracture.

Around the world osteoporosis affects one in three women and one in five men over the age of fifty. Interestingly, in Australia, one in two women and one in three men over the age of sixty will suffer at least one osteoporotic related fracture. However, there are actions that your members can take to reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

The good news for the fitness industry is that one of the best ways to build and maintain healthy bones is through weight training and weight bearing exercise. We know that, like muscles, bones should be used regularly or they will deteriorate. Bones need a variety of brief, frequent loads every day (e.g., normal daily activities like walking and climbing stairs) that are high in intensity to maintain their strength. Bones also need to be challenged through exercise, including impact activities such as running, lifting weights, jumping, or dancing. Low impact or non-weight bearing exercises, such as walking, cycling or swimming, will not have the same loading effect on bones, but are nevertheless excellent for overall health and weight control.

A regular, well structured exercise program can help protect your members against osteoporosis and osteoporosis-related fractures, and will also be an important part of rehabilitation for current sufferers. This is applicable for everyone, not just those over forty, as the following reasons illustrate.

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To find out more about the Perfect Practice™ training system and how you can use this wall chart to its fullest potential, e-mail perfectpractice@fitnessnetwork.com.au

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Exercise builds bone in children

How long a house will stand depends on the strength of the foundations. Likewise, how long bones stay healthy depends on how well they were made during the growing years.

Most people reach their peak bone mass in their twenties, as this is when bones have achieved their maximal mass (i.e. grams of mineral) and strength. Peak bone mass is generally maintained during adulthood and then it begins to decline during ageing (particularly during menopause). Doctors once thought that reaching this peak depended primarily on diet, including sufficient calcium intake, but recent studies have shown that exercise is as important as diet, if not more than, in laying the bone foundation that will serve for a lifetime. This is true throughout childhood and adolescence, but is especially important during, and in the years prior to, puberty. It is never too early, or indeed too late, to begin the process of making your members' bones as strong as possible.

Exercise maintains bone in adults

While exercise can help to build bones in young people, it can also help to maintain them in adults. The most dramatic example of this comes from an unearthly source – space – which demonstrated how inextricably linked exercise and bone maintenance are.

When cosmonauts and astronauts first travelled beyond the Earth's atmosphere, doctors back home eagerly awaited their return to see how zero gravity had affected them. The first and most obvious impact was that their muscles had wasted away. It was realised soon after, that so too had their bones.

In zero gravity muscles do not need to work as hard to help you sit up, stand, or lift something. The body responds to this by keeping only the muscles that are essential – what happens to astronauts is akin to what happens in retired weight lifters, the muscle tissue that is not needed anymore fades away, and with it, so too can bone.

Exercise aids rehabilitation

By helping to build and maintain bone and by improving balance and posture, exercise can play a major role in preventing osteoporosis and fractures.

But exercise can also play a crucial role in rehabilitation. Remember, muscle strength and bone strength are related, so muscle strengthening exercises can help to rebuild bone in those who have developed osteoporosis. It can also provide relief from one of the most debilitating outcomes of osteoporosis; pain after a fracture. ♦

How can you help your members?

- Encourage them to 'move it or lose it', because bone mass and exercise are inextricably linked.
- Encourage them to invest in their bones, and this includes your members' children, who should get plenty of exercise to help build their peak bone mass.
- Inform them that exercise, in addition to a healthy diet and lifestyle, can help to maintain their bone strength and slow the process that leads to osteoporosis.
- Help them understand that in older adults and the elderly improving balance, and strength and agility exercises help prevent falls that lead to fractures.
- Integrate impact and weight-bearing activities in programs for those who may be at risk of osteoporosis. Recommend skipping, jogging or weight training activities in preference to walking, swimming or cycling where possible.
- Distribute information about osteoporosis and the ways in which your club can help them prevent and/or treat it.
- Prescription of exercise for osteoporosis prevention will depend on the stage of life, the functional ability and the fracture risk of the individual.

For more information about osteoporosis you can visit the Osteoporosis Australia web site www.osteoporosis.org.au or phone Osteoporosis Australia on 02 9518 8140.

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