

Family Living Focus

by

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Teens Are Building Bones

Your body has 206 living bones that continually buildup and breakdown. The body starts to form most, 75-85 percent, of its bone mass before the teen years. Women reach their bone mass about age 25 and men at age 30, depending on your genes. By middle age the bones begin to lose density due to calcium withdrawal for such tasks as blood clotting and muscle contractions, like our beating heart.

You can't do anything about the genes you have, but you can reduce the risk of fractures with good health habits and other lifestyle choices. The main mineral is calcium. It adds strength and stiffness to bones that support the body. To lengthen long bones during growth, the body builds a scaffold of protein and fills this with calcium-rich mineral.

Between the ages of 11 and 25, you'll need about 1,300 milligrams of calcium each day. During adolescence your body has a higher capacity to absorb and retain calcium. The body also needs vitamin D to move calcium from the intestine to the bloodstream and into bones. You get vitamin D from short, normal exposure of arms and legs to sun and the foods fortified with the vitamin. Also needed are vitamins A, vitamin C, magnesium and zinc, as well as protein for building the scaffold.

Mother Nature provides many foods with these nutrients. One stands out, however, as "almost a perfect package." Milk is rich in calcium and high-quality protein. Most milk has vitamins D and A added and magnesium and zinc. All foods from the Food Guide Pyramid offer some calcium, from the grain based foods, the produce and high-protein, up to the fats and sweets "use sparingly" group at the top. To learn how much calcium is in the food, read the food label's Nutrition Facts panel.

FDA allows these terms on product labels: 20 percent of the daily value (DV) - "rich in calcium", 10 percent to 19 percent DV - "good source of calcium" and 10 percent DV - "calcium enriched or calcium fortified."

An easy plan to build your bones is to drink a glass of milk at each meal and eat one calcium food as a snack.

If you are unable to digest the lactose sugar in milk, try lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk. When fortified, these products can have up to 50 percent DV for calcium in one serving. There are also lactose drops and tablets to help digest dairy products like ice milk, yogurt and cheese.

Growing bones are sensitive to the impact of weight and muscle pull during exercise resulting in building stronger and denser bones. That's why it's important while you are growing to be phys-

Weird Winter Likely To Limit Maple Sugar Production

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — There's no point in trying to sugar coat it, warns an expert in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences — the unusually warm winter is likely to result in lower amounts of maple sap produced by trees in Pennsylvania.

"The season started much earlier this year than usual," says Jim Finley, associate professor of forest resources. "In much of the state, sap started flowing in January before anybody was ready to

collect it. We may produce a lot less maple sugar this year because producers missed part of the season."

Normally, the state's approximately 700 maple sugar producers tap trees in mid-February and collect sap until the end of March. Finley believes the season for sap-collecting ended in some parts of the state the first week of March. "I saw red maple bud expansion by then in many places," he says. "That usually indicates the time for sap collection is over."

According to Finley, Pennsylvania ranks fifth to eighth among states in maple sugar production most years. The output of maple sugar from Quebec, Canada, dwarfs American production.

He says Pennsylvania produces about a million pounds of maple sugar annually, which translates to 900,000 gallons of syrup and 43 million gallons of maple sap. If the sugar content of the sap is 2.5 percent, it takes 43 gallons of sap to make a gallon of syrup.

Ironically, another aspect of the weather — drought — was expected by many to stymie maple sugar production, but Finley explains why the recent lack of precipitation probably won't be a factor.

"The sugar collected this season was produced last summer by the trees and then stored over the

winter," he says. "The trees are converting the carbohydrates to sugar as they come out of dormancy. So precipitation in the last few months is not really much of a factor."

Finley is aware of drought conditions that affected much of the state last summer, but says trees in the primary maple-sugar-producing area — across the Northern Tier counties — didn't suffer significantly.

"Drought can affect the sugar content in maple sap," he says, "and if we continue to have a drought this summer, it may limit syrup production next year. But I don't believe the drought had much of an impact on producers this year."

Even producers who tapped maple trees early this winter probably didn't get the volume of sap they usually do, Finley believes. It was unseasonably warm in January, got cold, then warm again. Sap flow started, mostly stopped and started again.

"A tap hole where you put a spile (spout) only has so much life," says Finley. "Almost instantaneously when it is drilled, yeast, bacteria and fungus start growing in the hole. Eventually they literally plug the hole. Most producers, to protect their tree and minimize wood damage, won't drill a second hole the same year. They just give up on the year."

ically active on a regular basis. Jumping appears to be the best activity. Just do something to get off the couch and get moving at some activity. It really is a matter of use it or lose it!

Avoid bone risks such as skipping meals that would reduce your chance to get a third of your calcium that day. Replacing milk with non-dairy drinks like soda pop or fruit flavored drinks is another habit that prevents bone from getting the calcium and other nutrients they need. Alcohol and smoking can also hurt bones. Eating disorders can weaken bones as does extreme exercising.

Osteoporosis may seem too far away to worry about when you are a teen. But small changes today for better bones tomorrow may be more important than you might guess. Get the immediate benefit of a calcium rich diet: feel stronger and more fit now!

For more information about health and nutrition or other family living issues, contact Penn State Cooperative Extension in your county.

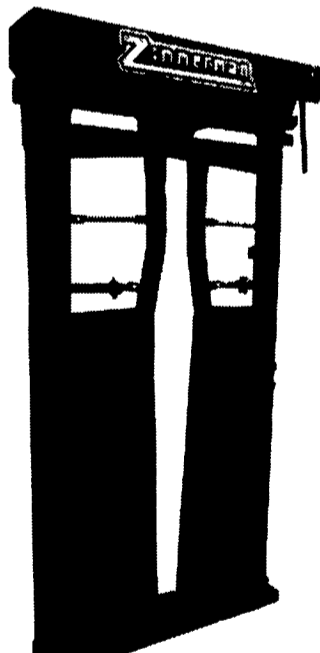


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