

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Take Care of Your Bones!

If all your Spring gardening and cleaning activities are not enough to remind you that you need strong bones, the Florida Department of Health is doing it for you. May is National Osteoporosis Month. Take care of your bones!

The statistics are pretty scary. About half of the women over age 50 will develop osteoporosis. About 1 in every 8 men of the same age get it. The DOH estimates that we Floridians alone spend about \$325 million a year to fix and care for broken bones due to osteoporosis. That doesn't count all the pain and suffering, or the limited abilities to keep up with regular activities, that come with weak fragile bones.

Unfortunately it starts much, much earlier, well before we hit that age. Most teens are not getting either the calcium or the exercise they need to keep their bones strong. Only about 20% of teen girls and barely 50% of teen boys are eating as much calcium as they should. The less calcium we manage to pack into our bones as teens the faster our bones weaken as we age. And using those bones in exercise is necessary for keeping the minerals there.

Bones are not just lumps of solid minerals. Inside, our bones are very active. The old calcium, potassium and magnesium that are there are continuously being taken out, and new minerals are put in. These minerals are used in other parts of our bodies too. They work in the nervous system, in enzymes and hormones. If we don't put enough in through our diet, our bones will give them up to keep the rest of us functioning. If we aren't doing enough exercise, using those bones to carry our weight

around, then not as much mineral is put back in. Over time the bones become more and more hollow, weaker and weaker, until one day they just snap. Ouch!

So how much calcium do we need? What about potassium and magnesium? Luckily all three minerals generally travel together in dairy products. If you get enough calcium from your food you will usually get a lot of the other two as well. Preteen children and teens need about 1300 mg of calcium a day. Young adults need at least 1000 mg. Once we hit 50 our needs increase again to 1200 mg a day.

How do we get that much? If you drink milk or eat dairy products it's easy. Milk and dairy provide calcium in the most easily digestible form. Each cup of milk gives us about 300 mg. An ounce of cheddar cheese provides about 200 mg. A cup of plain, low fat yogurt puts 400 mg into our system.

Lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk still has all its calcium. It will be the same as regular milk. Lactose-free cheese and yogurt are also good sources of calcium. If you prefer soy or rice milk, be sure to read the label. Unless these milks are fortified they will not be significant sources of calcium. Each serving should provide about 30% of the Daily Value for calcium.

While it's true that greens contain calcium we can only absorb a small amount of it from plant foods. Calcium fortified orange juice is an exception. We do absorb all the calcium from juice. Canned salmon, mackerel, sardines or anchovies, those fish where we eat the bones, can also be very significant sources of calcium. Since that calcium is all ready in an animal form it too is easy for us to digest and use.

If you don't care for the taste of milk, chocolate or strawberry milk are fine. Eat cheese (reduced fat, please!) or yogurt. Or stir some non-fat powdered milk into smoothies, into pancake batter, biscuit mix, soups and stews or any other casserole or

dish where you can hide it. Each tablespoon of dry milk powder adds about 95 mg of calcium.

Here's a delicious breakfast, or dessert for dinner that uses milk and some of our fresh seasonal blueberries. It needs to sit to absorb the milk, so plan ahead. But it bakes in just 20 to 30 minutes, so it's easy at the end. Enjoy!

Blueberry Strata

1 24-inch loaf of Cuban bread	3 C fat-free milk
3/4 C brown sugar or Splenda brown sugar mix	6 eggs or equivalent egg product
1 tsp vanilla extract	1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
2 C blueberries, washed and drained	1 C toasted pecans
1/4 C brown sugar	2-3 Tbsp melted butter or margarine

Spray a 9 x 13 inch baking pan with cooking spray. Slice bread into 20 one-inch slices. Arrange in single layer in pan. Whisk milk, eggs, vanilla, cinnamon and 3/4 C sugar or sweetener together to blend. Pour over bread. Cover bread with plastic wrap and refrigerate 8 - 12 hours. Preheat oven to 400° F. Remove bread from refrigerator, sprinkle blueberries, pecans and 1/4 C brown sugar across top. Drizzle with melted margarine. Bake 20-30 min or until browned and bubbly. Serve with maple or blueberry syrup if desired. Serve hot. Serves 12-16.

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