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Building Bones with Mama's Wisdom

One more link is being added to the chain of factors that build and keep bones strong. Osteoporosis, weak and fragile bones, is a major cause of falls and hospitalization in the elderly. It can affect even the Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers. It's often invisible until it is too late. Because it's been in the news, more and more people are getting their bone density tested. Some end up on medications in an attempt to rebuild their bones.

The first and best known link in the chain of strong bones has been mama's admonition "Drink your milk!" The standard wisdom is true, milk is good for your bones. So are cheese and yogurt, because they all have lots of calcium. So do anchovies, sardines and other fish canned with bones. Without calcium from some source, we can't make strong bones.

The second link in the chain is exercise. Twelve years of study, of over 61,000 women, has verified the link. The most active women, in any kind of physical activity, had 55% fewer fractures than the least active women. Walking four or more hours in a week gave these women 41% fewer fractures than women who only walked one hour a week. Starting exercise after a previously sedentary life decreased the risk, showing that it's never too late to start.

Now, a third link in the chain is appearing. Tuft's University researchers studied 2,500 people, measuring their bone density and keeping track of their eating patterns. Those who ate the most vitamin K, those good old leafy greens, have significantly

denser bones than those who ate the least. A half a cup of spinach, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, or turnip greens, even cauliflower or chickpeas, are all good sources of vitamin K. Get one of them a day, to keep your bones strong.

It appears that mama was right again. “Eat your vegetables, they’re good for you.” may be true in more ways than mama ever guessed!