

HEALTH YOURSELF

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The information in this publication is meant to educate readers about ways to help themselves avoid illness & live a longer, healthier life - not to provide medical advice for individual problems. For advice and treatment, consult your doctor or health care professional.

looking into

OSTEOPOROSIS

Most people tend to think of osteoporosis as something to worry about only if they are a woman and post-menopause. Yet it affects many people over the age of 40 (including men, who make up 20 per cent of sufferers). It is action taken in our teenage years and early 20s that does most to prevent it.

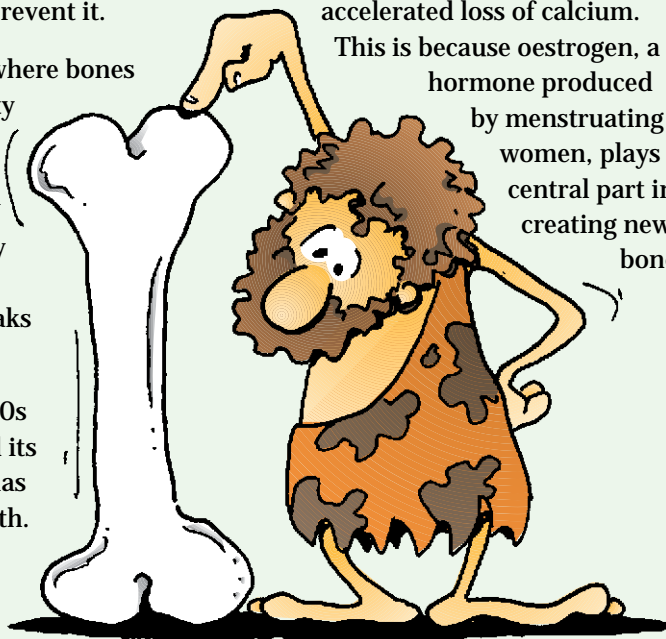
Osteoporosis is a condition where bones lose calcium and bone density and strength are decreased. This means that bones will break more easily and take a longer time to repair. Many elderly women in particular suffer from slow healing breaks in the wrists and hips.

By the time you reach your 30s your bone tissue has reached its *peak mass*, which means it has reached its maximum strength.

After this time, both men and women may lose up to one per cent of their bone mass every year, until women reach menopause. Women have drastically reduced levels of *oestrogen* in their body after menopause, and their bones

become weaker through accelerated loss of calcium.

This is because *oestrogen*, a hormone produced by menstruating women, plays a central part in creating new bone.



We hope you've enjoyed this blast from the past.

Want to know more?

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“The best way to remember your wife's birthday is to forget it once.”

Preventing Bone Loss

You can take positive steps to improve your bone strength at any time, but it makes sense that the more bone you have at peak bone mass (early 30s) the more you can afford to lose before you are in danger of fracturing a bone. As more than 60 per cent of our final adult bone mass is laid down during adolescence, it is important for teenagers, especially girls, to make their bones as strong as possible by following these guidelines:

Make sure you meet the RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) for calcium (for teenage girls this is 1000 mg per day), through eating a diet high in dairy products, green vegetables, fish with bones such as tinned salmon, tofu and other soybean products. Low fat dairy products, such as skim milk and low

fat yoghurt, often contain more calcium than their whole milk counterparts.



Commence some *weight bearing* exercise such as walking, jogging, dancing, tennis or squash and encourage this as early as possible with pre-teen girls. Just as muscles develop when exercised, so do bones.



Check out any menstrual irregularities such as extra long periods or skipped periods as this may indicate a low level of *oestrogen*.



Avoid excess caffeine, tobacco and alcohol as these may adversely affect the skeleton.



Avoid too much protein and sodium (salt) as they can increase the amount of calcium lost in the urine.