

Muscle and bone health

Novant Health Employer Solutions

Muscles and bones are connected and influence each other in many ways. It is important to understand how physical activity, diet and other lifestyle factors can affect your musculoskeletal system health.

The importance of exercise

Exercise affects your muscles and bones in similar ways.

- Muscles and bones work to make your body move.
- Aim to be active for at least 150 minutes per week to keep your bones and muscles strong.
- All exercise sessions should end with stretching to maintain flexibility and decrease risk of injury.
- To stay motivated, choose activities that you enjoy!

Exercises for muscle and bone health

Weight-bearing exercise is any activity that works your bones and muscles against gravity.

Examples of weight-bearing exercise

- Brisk walking, hiking and stair climbing
- Jogging and running
- Dancing
- Sports: tennis, pickleball, basketball

Strength-training exercise, also known as weight training, uses resistance to make muscles contract and work harder and, over time, become stronger.

Examples of strength-training

- Weight machines
- Free weights, elastic bands
- Body weight exercises (push-ups)

Nonimpact exercises are not as effective at strengthening bone, but they do strengthen muscles and provide significant flexibility and balance training. If you have a musculoskeletal condition, such as arthritis, that prevents you from doing weight-bearing activities, these are good alternatives.

Examples of nonimpact exercise

- Yoga and Tai Chi
- Swimming
- Cycling

Dietary tips for muscle and bone health

A balanced diet that is low in processed foods can help with muscle and bone health:

- High-quality protein and B vitamins can help support strong muscles and bones.
- Vegetables and dark leafy greens provide important vitamins, minerals and fiber.
- Calcium is essential for building and maintaining bones. Good sources: dairy products, almonds, broccoli, kale, sardines.
- Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium. Fatty fish like salmon, eggs and mushrooms are excellent sources. Sunlight contributes to your body's production of vitamin D.

Important lifestyle habits for strong muscles and bones

Maintain a healthy weight, avoid smoking and excessive alcohol use, and consume less caffeine.