



Bone health during cancer treatment

How to keep your bones strong during cancer treatments

- As you get older, your bones naturally get thinner. Some cancer treatments (like hormone therapy) and steroids (like prednisone and dexamethasone) can make your bones thin earlier than normal.
- When your bones get too thin it is called osteoporosis.
- Thin bones are weak and fragile. They can break easily from simple falls or movements.
- If your treatments put you at risk of osteoporosis you need to do things to keep your bones healthy.

For more information about osteoporosis go to www.osteoporosis.ca

Follow these tips to keep your bones healthy and strong

Exercise often:

- Exercise helps to lower your risk of falls and bone breaks.
- Do light to medium exercise for 30 minutes, 5 times a week. Try walking, dancing, or aerobics.
- Do strength training at least 2 days a week. Try lifting light weights or other weight-bearing exercise. Ask your healthcare team about exercises that are right for you.

Avoid Smoking:

- Smoking makes your bones weaker.
- Quitting smoking may reduce your risk of osteoporosis.
- Ask your health care team for support if you want to quit smoking.

Limit alcohol:

- Drinking too much alcohol can weaken your bones.
- Women should have no more than 1 drink a day.
- Men should have no more than 2 drinks a day.

Get enough vitamin D:

- Vitamin D helps your body to absorb calcium.
- Fatty fishes like herring, mackerel, salmon, sardines and tuna are high in vitamin D. It is also added to milk and soy milk during processing.
- Most people over 50 need to take a supplement that has between 800-2000 IU (International Units) of vitamin D each day.
- Some supplements may interfere with other medications, including oral anti-cancer drugs.
- Talk to your healthcare team before taking a supplements.

For more information about food sources of calcium and vitamin D visit Dietitians of Canada: www.dietitians.ca

Include a serving of high protein food at each meal:

- High protein foods include: meat, fish, poultry, beans, lentils, nuts, eggs, milk, yogurt and cheese.
- A serving is a piece of meat, poultry or fish about the same size as a deck of cards, 2 large eggs or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of legumes.

Get enough calcium:

- If you are at risk of osteoporosis, you need 1200 mg of calcium each day.
- Get as much calcium as you can from food. Your body absorbs calcium best when it comes from food.
- Have at least 3 servings of milk or other calcium sources each day.
- If you cannot get 1200 mg of calcium from food, ask your health care team about taking a supplement.
- Do not have more than 2000 mg of calcium a day.

These foods are high in calcium:

Food	Serving size	Calcium per serving (mg)	
Tofu made with calcium sulphate	about 1/3 of a package	150 grams	525
Swiss cheese	2 ounces	50 grams	440
Cheddar or mozzarella cheese	2 ounces	50 grams	390
Milk (skim, 1% or 2% or whole)	1 cup	250 ml	300
Buttermilk or chocolate milk	1 cup	250 ml	300
Plain yogurt	3/4 cup	175 ml	300
Dry milk powder	3 tablespoons	45 mg	280
Fortified drinks like soy milk, rice milk or orange juice	1 cup	250 ml	300



Quick Tip:

- 1 cup is about the size of a baseball
- 2 ounces of cheese is about the size of 4 dice
- 1 tablespoon is about the size of the top of your thumb