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## **Sue Ann Says: Support Your Daughter's Bones**

When I was growing up in rural Kendall, Wisconsin, beverage options for kids were mainly milk and water. Soda was never an option. My mother made Kool-Aid for an occasional treat, but it was more fun to sell it at our Kool-Aid stand than to drink it! We never really worried about calcium intake because dairy products were abundant in our household, naturally warding off osteoporosis.

But, that's changed...especially for our adolescent daughters. Research shows that bone fracture rates are increasing, girls are exercising less, and few are getting the recommended amounts of calcium and vitamin D – the building blocks for strong bones. This lifestyle is putting our daughters at risk for osteoporosis later in life.

Why is this so disturbing? **Because girls build nearly 90 percent of their bone mass by age 18!**

That's why I'm a fan of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' campaign called *Best Bones Forever!*<sup>™</sup>, a national bone health campaign aimed at helping girls ages 9-14 and their parents understand that now is the time to build strong bones for life.

The message for parents is one of urgency. Your daughters need your support.

### **Parents Promoting Bone Health**

According to the campaign, many parents feel they have little control over what their kids eat and how much physical activity they get when they are away from home. But, many girls say their parents play a big role in the health choices they make. When asked about who has the biggest influence on what they eat, girls ages 8 to 15 said: their parents (83%), themselves (60%), and friends (19%).

So, what can you do?

- Be a good role model for your family.
- Make being healthy a part of your family routine.
- Help her make healthy food choices, including foods high in calcium and vitamin D.
- Help her get one hour of physical activity daily, including bone-strengthening activities at least three days per week.

### **The Numbers She Needs**

## **1,300**

The amount in milligrams (mg) of calcium your daughter needs every day. Shoot for 3-a-day of low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt and cheese, green leafy vegetables, and calcium-fortified orange juice. Make sure she also eats more foods with vitamin D. Most milk and some yogurt and cereals are fortified with vitamin D.

## **60**

The number of minutes of physical activity your daughter needs each day. Make sure she chooses bone-strengthening activities, like running and jumping rope, at least three days per week to help build strong bones. Let your daughter choose the bone-strengthening activities she likes best.

Here are some examples of bone-strengthening, often referred to as weight-bearing, exercises:

- Basketball
- Dancing
- Hiking
- Jogging
- Jumping rope
- Karate
- Running
- Soccer
- Tennis
- Volleyball
- Walking
- Weight lifting

(You should know that while biking and swimming are great cardiovascular exercises, they're not bone strengthening.)

### **Bone Bandits**

These bone bandits may put your daughter at risk for osteoporosis later in life.

**Soda**—For many girls soda replaces milk (and the important calcium and vitamin D that comes with it) in their diets. Encourage your daughter to choose low-fat or fat-free milk; calcium-fortified orange juice; or water. (It's better for their teeth, too, since soda corrodes tooth enamel and can stain teeth.)

**Screen time**—Too much time in front of the TV, computer or smartphone means less time for physical activity. Limit your daughter's screen time to less than two hours a day.

**Alcoholic drinks**—There are a lot of dangers of underage drinking—including damage to your child's bones. Alcohol reduces the ability of the body's cells to make bone. Research shows that

the effects of heavy alcohol abuse on bones cannot be reversed. Talk to your daughter about the harmful effects of alcoholic drinks on growing bones and be a good role model.

**Smoking**—The nicotine and toxins in cigarettes destroy the bone-building cells in the body and can prevent girls from reaching peak bone mass. Some girls start smoking as a way to lose weight. Teach your daughter the harmful effects of smoking and encourage her to be physically active, which can help her maintain a healthy weight.

I encourage you to visit the *Best Bones Forever!*<sup>®</sup> website, [www.bestbonesforever.gov/parents](http://www.bestbonesforever.gov/parents), to take advantage of their free tools and resources. Parents can make a big difference in helping their kids build strong, healthy bones now to prevent osteoporosis later...and the things that improve bone health are also good for overall health.

Because it all begins with a healthy woman...

*Sue Ann Thompson is founder and president of the Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation (WWHF), a statewide non-profit organization whose mission is to help Wisconsin women and their families reach their healthiest potential. WWHF provides programs and conducts forums that focus on education, prevention, and early detection; connects individuals to health resources; produces and distributes the most up-to-date health education and resource materials; and, awards grants and scholarships to women health researchers and related community non-profits. To learn more, visit [wwhf.org](http://wwhf.org) or call 1-800-448-5148.*

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#### **What your daughter needs every day:**

- **1,300** milligrams of **calcium**
- **600** international units of **vitamin D**
- **60** minutes of **physical activity**