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Media Release –The Health Benefits of Exercise for Osteoporosis
From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



The Health Benefits of Exercise for Osteoporosis

With World Osteoporosis Day coming up on 20th October, it's worth making time to check in with your bone health.

Our bones are living tissue, with an outer shell and dense structures within. Bones are designed to be light, strong and have some flexibility. They provide structural support for our bodies and are involved in the production of blood cells and mineral storage.

While we generally think of osteoporosis as being a disease of old age, as this is most commonly when it is diagnosed, the ground work in preventing the onset starts well before then.

In our 20's we reach peak bone mass, as at this time we are at the optimal balance of new bone growth and repair. As we age, and as lifestyle and diseases impact on our health, there can be a loss of balance between new bone growth and old bone breaking down, leading to a loss in bone density. Once this loss reaches a certain level, a diagnosis of osteoporosis is made.

Prevention of this can be assisted by a couple of key factors. A contributor to osteoporosis prevention is a well-balanced diet. It is the calcium and vitamin D that assists in this area. There is no conclusive evidence that more is better, so a balanced and varied diet is adequate rather than mega dosing. For those with specific dietary restrictions that may lead to reduced vitamin consumption, advice from a dietician is recommended.

Another significant factor is physical activity and exercise, with a regular exercise programme is essential for bone health. Specifically weight bearing exercise offers the best defense and this includes lifting weights as well as using your bodyweight as resistance. While activities such as cycling and swimming have a range of valuable health benefits, these activities are not considered weight bearing.

One of the factors that affects those with osteoporosis is the increased chances of broken bones, especially as balance is compromised with age and inactivity, leading to increased falls. In fact, approximately 1 in 3 people over the age of 65 will fall in any one year. Osteoporosis will increase the chances of these falls leading to fractures.

Once again, exercise comes to the rescue. While weight bearing exercise is the gold standard in osteoporosis prevention, it is balance exercises that assist most in falls prevention.

The New Zealand Falls Prevention Research Group was involved in the development of a falls prevention programme which used a set of leg muscle strengthening and balance exercises designed to prevent falls. The programme was taught one on one to participants and resulted in a reduction of 35% in both the number of falls, and the number of injuries resulting from falls in programme participants. Simple exercises carried out regularly, under professional guidance, reduces falls and its outcomes.

So, whether you are looking to prevent osteoporosis through weight bearing exercise, or reducing its impact through falls prevention, keeping active every day through exercise and physical activity will have benefits to your bones, as well as your overall health.

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NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the “warrant of fitness check” that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

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Exercise Association of New Zealand - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

