

Seven dietary mistakes that hurt your bones

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[Dr. Charles Price](#) for redOrbit.com – Your Universe Online

There is plenty of information about proper foods for optimum bone health, but here's a list of some common dietary mistakes people make in pursuit of this.

1. Too much salt causes us to lose calcium in order to get rid of the extra salt.

Salt content is often high in canned soups, salty snacks, prepared foods, and processed meats. No one knows why we lose calcium in order to get rid of the salt. During medical school I served as a research assistant to Donald P. Griffith, MD who proved that restricting salt intake can help prevent bone loss in astronauts during space travel. Too much salt also lowers our magnesium levels and magnesium is almost as important as calcium for bone health. Using herbs and spices add taste to foods so you can avoid excessive salt. More spices for your foods may help you consume less than 1,500 mg of daily salt as recommended by the American Heart Association.

2. Sodas are also linked to weak bones for several reasons.

Sodas often replace healthy drinks like milk and fruit juices. Also, the phosphorous in soda may limit our ability to use the calcium we consume. Excessive soda consumption also lowers magnesium levels that are needed for bone health.

3. Excessive coffee consumption is bad for bones, but there are other health benefits of coffee so we recommend coffee in moderation.

If you're drinking more than three or four cups of coffee a day, then add some extra calcium because coffee decreases calcium absorption and increases calcium loss. Try substituting tea to decrease excessive coffee consumption. There's some evidence that tea drinkers have a lower risk of hip fracture.

4. Too much alcohol causes bone loss along with numerous other problems.

However, modest alcohol, especially [beer, is healthy for bones](#). People who consume one alcoholic beverage daily actually have a lower risk of fracture than non-drinkers. However, heavy drinkers have weak bones, frequent falls, and more broken bones than non-drinkers.

5. Unfortunately, too much chocolate may also increase the risk of weak bones.

A study of women who consumed more than one daily serving of chocolate showed a higher risk of weak bones than women who consumed chocolate less than once a week. One cause may be that too many sweets can displace healthy foods in the diet. However, chocolate contains oxalates that may interfere with calcium absorption. Calcium loss is also a problem and one study showed that three ounces of dark

chocolate increases calcium excretion by 150%. Chocolate has other health benefits, so enjoy chocolate in moderation.

6. Vitamin A supplements can increase breakdown of bones and interfere with vitamin D, especially supplements with the retinol form of vitamin A.

The beta carotene form of vitamin A does not seem to cause these problems, so vitamin A from plant sources is safe. Plants rich in beta carotene include yellow vegetables, tomatoes, watermelon, apricots, and leafy greens. The retinol form of vitamin A is high in liver, so watch out for excessive consumption of liver, and watch out for vitamin supplements and fortified cereals with excessive retinol. The National Institutes of Health warns against taking more than 10,000 IU of the retinol form of vitamin A on a daily basis.

7. The “Western Diet” that’s common in North America is unhealthy for bones.

This is also called the “meat-sweet” diet and includes excessive amounts of fats, sugar, red meats, and refined grains such as white flour that’s used for white pasta and white breads. It’s better to eat fish, whole grains, vegetables, and fruits as recommended in the Dietary Guidelines from the USDA. .

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