Silent Thieves

Osteoporosis is a common condition for people ages 50 and older. Although it is more common in women, anyone can be affected. It is a condition where bone strength weakens and is susceptible to fracture. Hips, wrists or spines are common areas.

Many try to prevent or avoid osteoporosis by taking calcium supplements or eating a calcium rich diet, including a varied nutritious diet including all essential nutrients. However, you can also reduce caffeine consumption, avoid smoking, limit alcohol consumption, sun-basking for absorbing adequate amount of vitamin D and regular exercise to keep the bones and muscles strong. Vitamin D is essential for many things. Calcium and vitamin D get a lot of attention for promoting bone health, but consuming certain foods and nutrients can weaken your bones, increasing your risk for osteoporosis and dangerous fractures.

Unfortunately, one of our favorite beverages, coffee, is a culprit. **Caffeine** from any source works against strong bones by interfering with calcium absorption. When I first read this, I was quite surprised, but also relieved that I started drinking half-caf many years ago. Then, more recently, I switched to de-caf. I really have not noticed a change in taste.

Other foods that can rob your bones of calcium or inhibit calcium absorption include red meat, high sodium foods, hydrogenated oils, and foods rich in vitamin A. Salty foods, and high protein are also considered to be bad for bone health.

Reference: consumerscompanion.com/food-causes-calcium-leaching-from-the-bones/

A high-protein diet can be good for bones, as long as you get enough calcium. Specifically, a 12-year study of more than 3,724 adults found that among people who consumed at least 800 mg of calcium daily, the risk for hip fracture was reduced by 85% for those who ate the most protein (about 76 g daily) compared with those who ate the least (about 46 g daily).

Only when calcium intake was below 800 mg daily was high protein intake bad for bones—it was linked to nearly three times the risk for hip fracture. Instead of limiting your protein intake, make doubly sure to get enough calcium. Aim to consume 1,200 mg of calcium daily if you are age 51 or older (1,000 mg if you are age 19 to 50) from dietary sources… and/or a calcium supplement if your diet is lacking.

Soda consumption has been linked to increased risk for osteoporosis. Some nutritionists theorize that *phosphoric acid*, a major ingredient in soda, disrupts the balance between phosphorus and calcium that is needed to maintain bone health. However, there's not enough data to prove this theory. Another possibility is that soda drinkers are likely to skimp on calcium-rich beverages, such as milk or calcium-fortified orange juice. Limit soda intake—or if you do drink soda, be sure to balance it with heavy calcium intake.

Vitamin D is needed to promote calcium absorption. The Institute of Medicine recently confirmed that older adults (age 71 and older) need 800 international units (IU) of vitamin D daily and those ages 14 to 70 need 600 IU daily.

Vitamin D should come, ideally, from foods such as egg yolks, fortified milk and salmon (which provide additional nutrients), but most people will need a supplement to reach the desired level.

However, not all vitamins are necessarily good for our bones. In fact, excessive vitamin A may *threaten* bone health—very high levels have been linked to bone loss. Even though the scientific evidence linking high vitamin A levels to bone fracture is not definitive, it's still wise not to exceed the recommended daily intake for this vitamin—3,000 IU for men and 2,333 IU for women.

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