

8 Foods To Avoid For Osteoporosis

Globally, osteoporosis causes more than 8.9 million fractures a year. That translates to roughly one osteoporotic fracture every three seconds.

And get this... your diet could be contributing to your risk of osteoporosis.

I'm afraid it's true. And there are eight common foods in particular which you should be avoiding. (We'll get to them in just a moment).

But first, let's take a quick look at the diet in question. The Standard American Diet, or SAD. **SAD affects your bones in two ways:**

- It's laden with bone-destroying refined sugars and carbohydrates. Many of these foods carry pro-inflammatory fats and chemicals that stimulate bone removing osteoclasts.
- It's also criminally lacking in essential bone-building vitamins and minerals like calcium. High-nutrient foods like leafy greens, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes are absent from much of the Standard American Diet too.

In fact, our Bone Health Expert Lara Pizzorno calls the Standard American Diet "the perfect recipe for osteoporosis."

"The SAD eats your bones, in large part by causing chronic inflammation along with metabolic acidosis, an acidic pH in the body that results in calcium being withdrawn from bone to restore a more alkaline state," she says in an excerpt from her (currently unnamed) new bone health book.

Obviously, that's bad news for your bone density.

So with that in mind, we've answered the question: what foods are bad for osteoporosis? Cutting out these foods will not only improve your bone density but improve your overall health too.

1. Cola-Type Sodas

Cola-type sodas have been shown to have a damaging effect on bone density. And phosphoric acid seems to be the culprit. Now, phosphorus is an essential mineral for

cell structure and function, but when consumed in excess, it has adverse effects on metabolism and health. And excess sums up the Standard American Diet in a nutshell.

Americans consume far more phosphorus on a daily basis than is recommended. In fact, the 2006 Framingham Osteoporosis study found that people who regularly drank cola-based sodas (three or more per day) had as much as 4% lower bone mineral density. And those same phosphorus levels are present in sugar-free sodas. So even if you're not taking in high quantities of refined sugar, that doesn't mean your bones are safe.

Excess phosphorus pulls calcium from your bones, which is then lost through urine. It's also really hard on your kidneys to process that much phosphorus.

2. Refined Sugar and Carbohydrates

There are many health issues associated with excess sugar consumption. For starters, it elevates blood pressure, depletes vitamins and minerals, contributes to heart and liver damage, and even causes gout.

Plus excess sugar consumption increases your levels of triglycerides and LDL- bad cholesterol. This combination leads to fat buildup in artery walls, which increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

The average person gets 25% of their calories from sugar, which greatly contributes to insulin resistance and weight gain.

Elevated blood sugar accelerates a process called glycation. Glycation is when glucose attaches to proteins like collagen and elastin, and makes them rigid. These rigid proteins are known as advanced glycation end products (AGEs) and trigger an inflammatory reaction. This causes your skin to age, and as we know, inflammation is also damaging to your bones.

AGEs have also been linked to diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

And when it comes to your bones, high blood sugar is proven to increase urinary calcium excretion, just like phosphorus.

To cut back on your sugar intake, we recommend getting your sweet fix elsewhere. Try a natural sweetener like Stevia or even raw honey as a way of "weaning" yourself off sugar.

The top foods to avoid/limit are cakes, candy, canned soup, juices, biscuits, granola bars, and pasta sauces. They all have a surprising amount of added sugar in them!

Replace these with healthier alternatives like tea, seafood, pumpkin seeds, walnuts, lentils, quinoa, almonds and pistachios — all great foods for preventing osteoporosis.

Sugar-laden foods like cakes and cookies are typically made from high-glycemic, simple carbohydrates too. Simple carbs are very quickly and easily converted to glucose when they're digested.

In fact, you can find 100 g of glucose in a single serving of any of the following:

- Soda
- Fruit juice
- Bread
- Crackers
- Bagels
- Potato chips
- Corn chips
- Pretzels
- White rice
- Breakfast cereal

Any of those foods — which are all part of the Standard American Diet — will cause a massive insulin spike. In time, regular consumption of excess sugar builds insulin resistance, and ultimately paves the way to type 2 diabetes.

3. Charred and Burnt Foods

There's a lot of food marketing geared towards flame-grilled food.

You've seen the ads showcasing food with intentional char marks and crispy blackened edges with customers drool in the background, right?

But while it may look picture perfect in a commercial for a steakhouse, those char marks are actually really bad for you.

The AGEs we mentioned earlier — the ones that are created when your blood sugar is high — are also present in charred and burnt foods. Your body is able to eliminate AGEs with antioxidants and enzymes, but if the amount in your system is suddenly and dramatically increased, your body can't keep up. As AGEs accumulate, they trigger inflammation.

How can you avoid adding AGEs to your food? Avoid dry heat cooking methods like grilling, baking, broiling, searing, and toasting. Dry heat cooking can actually increase AGEs in foods by 10 to 100 times as much as uncooked food.

Instead, boil, steam, slow cook, or pan fry (medium heat) your foods.

Foods that are high in animal fat and protein — red meat, cheese, fried eggs, butter, highly processed foods — are especially high in AGEs.

4. Salt

Keep your bones in tip-top shape by keeping your salt intake in check.

With pre-packaged and fast foods being a staple in the Standard American Diet, salt intake is higher than ever. And when it comes to your bones, excess salt intake may increase the loss of calcium through urine. Research has found that for each 100 mmol (2,300 mg) increase in salt in your diet, calcium is expelled by 1.4 mmol (32.2 mg). If this loss is assumed to be from the bone, then this equates to about an additional 1% bone loss each year.

So, what does this mean for you?

A good osteoporosis diet is one that is low in salt. For an adult, less than 5g (just under a teaspoon) fulfills your recommended daily salt intake.

Top foods to limit and avoid are processed foods, cured meats, sauces, salad dressings, cheese, instant soups, bagels, and frozen dinners. Good replacements for these salty foods are dark leafy greens, plain yogurt, unsalted rice and pasta, dried fruits, mozzarella, eggs, couscous, and fresh fish.

Cut back or eliminate soft drinks and substitute with water, tea, fresh juice, or coconut water.

5. Pro-Inflammatory Fats

Not all fats are created equal, which is why you've likely heard plenty about "healthy fats". You can get healthy fats, like omega 3 fatty acids, from whole food sources like avocado, fish, dairy, and oils like olive and flax.

Not only does fat provide you with an immediate energy boost, but it also allows your body to absorb and transport fat-soluble vitamins, including vitamins A, D, E, and K. And without those, your ability to absorb calcium would decrease dramatically.

Then there are unhealthy fats like vegetable oils.

Vegetable oils like soy, corn, sunflower, and canola are loaded with polyunsaturated omega 6 essential fatty acids. Omega 6s encourage inflammation, opposed to their anti-inflammatory counterpart, omega 3 fatty acids.

The final fats to mention are the worst. Trans fats. These fats significantly increase your likelihood of developing heart problems, insulin sensitivity, and chronic inflammation. Trans fats simultaneously raise harmful LDL cholesterol levels while lowering protective HDL cholesterol, and are also pro-inflammatory.

Basically all processed foods contain trans fats. Think chips, cookies, fries, and pastries. Try to avoid these foods at all costs!

Ideally, a healthy diet has 20–35% of calories coming from healthy fat sources. If you don't have enough healthy fat in your diet, you run the risk of having low energy stores and not being able to properly absorb fat-soluble vitamins. But if you have too much pro-inflammatory fat in your diet, you increase your risk of obesity, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and osteoporosis.

6. Food Sensitivities

Did you know that over 70% of your immune system is found in your digestive tract? That's why it's so important to have a properly functioning digestive system.

Food sensitivities like celiac and lactose intolerance are commonplace these days and are largely catered to by food manufacturers. Gluten-free sections are popular in most grocery stores and lactose-free milk and yogurt are readily available as well.

But why are some people sensitive to these foods while others aren't?

Well, anyone whose genetic inheritance includes haptoglobin 1-2 or 2-2 (which is more than 90% of us) will react to gluten. Wheat, barley, rye, spelt, and all the stuff made with these grains contain gluten. Those with an intolerance will experience what's known as "leaky gut," or intestinal permeability. This means that toxins and undigested food are able to pass through the intestinal lining, which triggers an immune response. That response is chronic inflammation, which in turn damages your bone health.

And lactose intolerance affects around 65% of the world's population. It's most common in Finland where one in every 60,000 infants is born with the intolerance, and can affect up to 90% of adults of Asian descent. People of West African, Italian, Greek, or Arab descent are also more likely to suffer from lactose intolerance. On the other hand, northern Europeans are the least likely to develop an intolerance (only 5% of adults do

on average) because of their longstanding history of consuming unfermented dairy products.

If you struggle from bloating, indigestion, gas, reflux, or other bowel issues, this may be a sign that you are suffering from a food sensitivity.

If you experience any of these symptoms, try an elimination diet to discover the cause. Do this by taking out the food you believe may be causing your sensitivity for 3 weeks, then reintroduce it. You can also ask your doctor for a sensitivity test.

7. Excess Alcohol

Chronic and heavy alcohol consumption is not only bad for your bones, but your overall health. However, some alcohol, especially red wine in moderation, can actually be good for you.

Research from the University of Oregon shows moderate consumption of red wine on a regular basis benefits your bones. This is especially true for aging women who have experienced menopause.

Red wines benefits are believed to be linked to the resveratrol in it, which inhibits bone-resorbing osteoclasts and boosts the formation of bone-building osteoblasts. For beer, its benefits are likely due to its silicon content.

So you can still enjoy a glass with dinner! A regular glass of red wine or beer as part of a healthy lifestyle can actually be protective of bone health.

And in fact, those who consume no alcohol at all, have higher risk for type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's, and all-cause mortality.

Moderate alcohol consumption guidelines approve up to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men.

8. Non-Organic Fruits and Veggies

We've talked a lot already about pro-inflammatory foods, but it isn't just food that can cause chronic inflammation and sudden inflammatory responses. Indeed, the chemicals used in the production of food start contributing to your bone loss long before you ever step foot in a grocery store.

Fruits and veggies are good for you, no doubt about it. But there's a big difference between the produce that *looks* good and the produce that *is* good.

There are an incredible amount of pesticides used to keep produce beautiful and bug-free. And these pesticides contaminate the vast majority of commercially farmed produce. That's why we encourage you to purchase organic fruit and vegetables whenever possible.

Pesticides have been linked to a range of harmful side effects, from bone loss to reduced fertility and even ADHD.

Every year, the Environmental Working Group releases the Shopper's Guide to Pesticides. This guide runs through the Clean Fifteen, a list of produce with the least amount of pesticide used, and the Dirty Dozen, which are the 12 worst offending fruit and veg.

This makes it easier for you to decide which foods are worth shelling out a little extra to buy organic. The same goes for your supplements — choosing all natural and organic supplements should be your first choice.

Takeaways

And there we have it! Those are the eight foods to avoid, limit, and eliminate to keep your bones happy and healthy.

The safest strategy is to make sure that you're consuming foods low in salt, healthy fats, and minimally processed whole grains, fruit, and vegetables. Be sure to always meet your recommended calcium daily intake and use supplements to increase your bone density. And remember to always wash your produce before eating it, especially if you purchased something that isn't organic.