

WV Wellness

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Walking Can Be a Bone Booster

Experts have recommended high-impact aerobic exercise as a means for increasing bone mass, but a review of 24 studies on aerobic exercise and bone mineral density in women suggests that walking just 30 minutes per day a few days a week is enough to moderately increase overall bone density.

A team of researchers from the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions in Boston analyzed studies that followed predominantly sedentary women assigned to aerobic exercise programs lasting 16 weeks or more.

Walking was the preferred form of exercise by most participants. Compared to non-exercisers, the regular exercisers increased their bone mass by about two percent.

Exercise helps strengthen bones because it forces them to bear weight, which is why high-impact exercise elicits even greater gains in bone density.

The fact that walking and other low-impact activities are also beneficial, however, is particularly encouraging given that many women find high-impact exercise painful or difficult to master.

Experts recommend women follow a program that combines both aerobic activity and weight training, which also increases bone mass, to lower their risk of developing osteoporosis.

Source: Annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, October 24, 2001.

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