



Get Hip to Bone Health

(ARA) - It's that time of year again . . . time to warm up with the weather and make good on promises to take better care of ourselves. Yet, we often end up asking ourselves the same age-old question -- where to begin? One of the easiest first steps to improving and preserving wellness starts with the very skeleton of our being -- our bones.

Building bone mass is just as important as maintaining bone mass and density, especially since the threat of osteoporosis is no longer limited to age. Osteoporosis is almost always a completely preventable disease; however, few of us know enough about the risk factors to begin protecting ourselves and our loved ones.

The widespread lack of knowledge about bone health is evident from a survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation in 2006, for GTC Nutrition. This survey found that most Americans underestimate the percentage of young women who are not getting enough calcium during the peak bone-building years. Studies show 90 percent of girls ages 12 to 19 are not getting enough calcium, and more than two-thirds of all respondents to the survey weren't aware of the extent of this shortfall, including 66 percent of the respondents with children in their households.



Additionally, more than half (55 percent) of the 1,031 survey respondents were unaware that the body absorbs only about 30 percent of the calcium consumed through diet. With osteoporosis on the rise and more than 40 million Americans estimated to suffer from low bone mass by 2010, according to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, now is the time for the whole family to get hip to bone health.

Although these survey findings are concerning, they underscore the opportunity we have to increase our overall health and well-being by learning more about bone health and the factors that influence it, including calcium absorption. Building strong and healthy bones requires not only consuming a diet rich in calcium but also taking steps to ensure that sufficient calcium is absorbed.

In recent years, food companies have responded by offering "better for you" calcium-enriched food, beverage and supplement alternatives. Taking action to improve your bones through dietary habits is an important first step on the path to building and maintaining strong bones.

Just as crucial to taking in and absorbing adequate amounts of calcium is the need to exercise regularly. There is no better time of year than the present to get outdoors and build your bones. Whether you decide to increase your bone health by pounding the pavement or lifting weights, your body will thank you for years to come.