

(Part 1 in a series of how to build strong bones, one month at a time)

Strong Bones RN, RU?

What???

As an adult, this might not make much sense, but catchy text messages such as this have a way of attracting the attention of kids and teens, the exact people we want to hear this message.

“Strong Bones are in, are you?” What exactly is the message? The National Association of school nurses have developed resources about bone health for school nurses to share in their schools, hence the catchy “RN, RU” part of the message. The message is that eating calcium and participating in weight-bearing physical activities can help build healthy bones and reduce the risk of osteoporosis later in life. A very important message for our young population indeed, but we adults need to get ready to learn all we can about bone health so we can implement the necessary strategies in our children.

Approximately 44 million Americans have osteoporosis or low bone mass (National Osteoporosis Foundation, 2003). The effects of osteoporosis and subsequent fractures on quality of life are becoming well known to health care providers and those of us who have seen many older Americans lose their independence after breaking a hip. As adults, some of us are hearing our health provider’s talk to us about calcium supplements and the new bone density scanning screening tests that are available to assess how strong our bones are and the likelihood of us having a fracture with an accident.

It is important to those of us who become educated about bone health, to begin to address bone health in an early age because optimal bone growth in childhood has an impact on later bone mass. A National Institute of Health Consensus Panel has made the following statement: *The bone mass attained early in life is perhaps the most important determinant of lifelong skeletal health. Individuals with the highest peak bone mass after adolescence have the greatest chance in preventing serious bone mass loss that naturally occurs with aging, illness and the change in our hormone levels.*

With that in mind, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women’s Health, and the Osteoporosis Foundations have all teamed up to make recommendations on what you can learn about bone health. With this impressive list of agencies working together, there ought to be some good information that we can learn and incorporate into our daily lives, and to share with the younger generation. After all, if we haven’t taken care of our bone health, these young adults will be the ones looking after us while we recover from our broken hip.

Next time, I will address the necessary recommendations in Part 2 of “Strong Bones, rn, ru”?

Wendy Hladick, RN, PA-C