

HEALTHY, HAPPY BONES

ADULT HUMANS NORMALLY have 206 bones in their bodies. Bone is living tissue, which constantly is either built or dissolved. The bones make up the skeleton which supports and holds the body upright, helps the body move and protects some of the vital organs such as the brain, heart and lungs. When bones become weak or diseased, they fracture more easily and can be the cause of considerable pain and discomfort, as well as impede movement of the body.

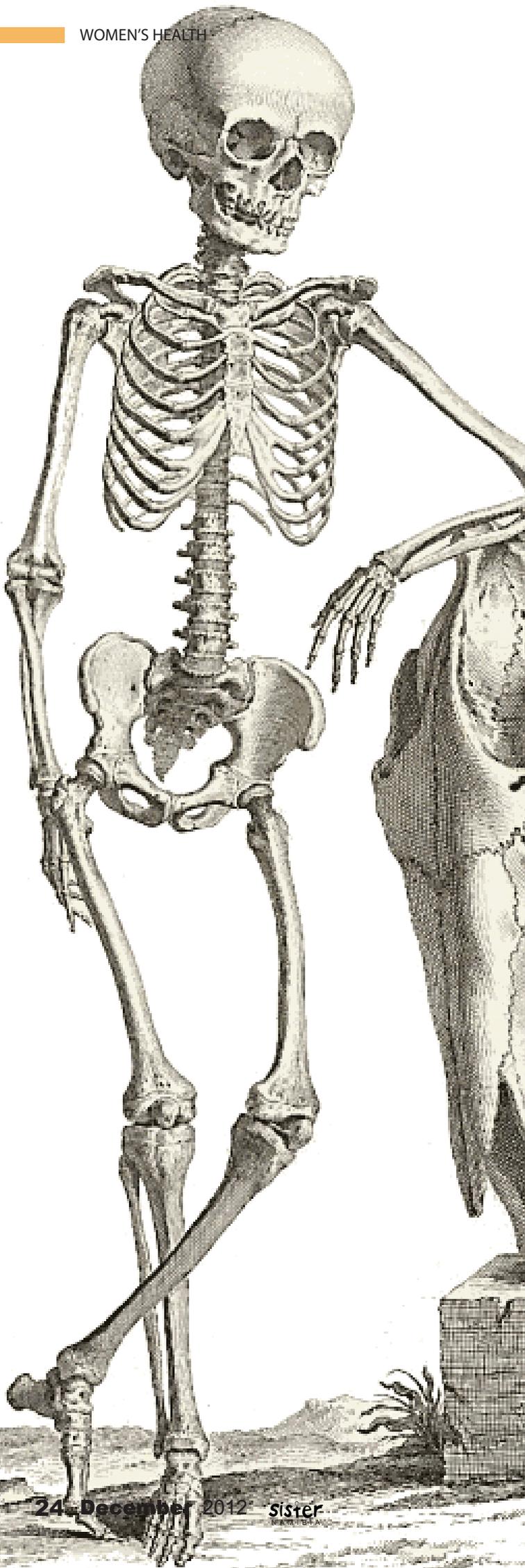
Among the diseases that affect bone are arthritis, rickets and osteoporosis.

Women generally are more likely than men to develop osteoporosis. The word osteoporosis literally means porous bones and as suggested, this is a disease that causes bones to become weak and more at risk to breaking.

The reason why women are more affected than men is because we tend to have smaller, thinner bones than men. Also, when a woman reaches her menopause, her body produces less Oestrogen, which is a hormone in women that protects bones. You may not know this, but women at around the age of 30, stop producing new bone. While osteoporosis is generally considered an old-person's disease, it also occurs in young children and adolescents if they have inherited bone diseases, have physical disabilities or have limited movement.

As girls are under more pressure than boys to be thin, they generally are more affected by eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia. If a girl's weight is too low, she stops getting her period as a result, her body produces less oestrogen. This, and the fact that they do not get enough of the right minerals and protein means that very thin girls are more vulnerable to bone fractures and osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is sometimes referred to as the silent disease. Because it happens in the bones you may not know that you have osteoporosis



until you fracture a bone. Unfortunately, once you have an osteoporotic fracture, you are at high risk of having another. Early detection of this disease therefore is very important. Usually your body gives you signs when something is going wrong. Some signs of osteoporosis might include losing your balance and falling frequently, the loss of body height, spinal deformities such as stooped posture. The clearest sign is fracturing of bones even when bumping, straining or falling. Do not wait to break or fracture a bone before seeing a doctor. Losing your balance more frequently is a good enough reason to see a doctor whether or not you have osteoporosis.

The good news is that osteoporosis can be prevented and it can be cured. As usual, prevention is better than cure. Everybody needs enough vitamin D which is essential to help the body absorb calcium which is the most important building block of bone. The best sources of vitamin D is sunlight (of which we have more than enough,) oily fish, including sardines and tuna, fortified milk and cereals, eggs and liver. Babies usually get calcium either from breast milk or from formula. As the child grows, milk, yogurt and other dairy products are the most important source of calcium.

In addition to a good and calcium and vitamin D-rich diet, it is important to do weight-bearing exercise like walking or running as this helps to strengthen the bones.

If you want to prevent osteoporosis, stop smoking, drink alcohol and caffeine only in moderation, maintain a healthy weight, and try and avoid becoming too thin.

Remember, it is always good to first consult a doctor before you embark on a specialised diet and exercise plan.

For more information:

<http://www.everydayhealth.com/osteoporosis/osteoporosis-and-gender.aspx>

4 WAYS TO STAY HEALTHY OVER THE HOLIDAYS

Exchange fatty foods with healthier options: Instead of chocolate, have dried fruits and nuts, or you can replace vetkoek with brown bread.

HAVE A WORK OUT SCHEDULE:

Run, walk, or even do a few simple aerobics at home, but make sure you do an activity every day.

Avoid "white foods" - Foods like white potatoes, white rice and all white flour products have the ability to increase your appetite. Thus, it's best to avoid them altogether to reduce the chances of eating more. Replace them with foods like wholewheat flour, brown rice and more fruits and vegetables.

Increase your intake of whole grains and beans- Replace starchy foods such as macaroni, pap or rice with whole grains and beans, they are a much healthier choice.