

Diet, active living, screenings help keep bones strong

Yes, COVID is still here and so is the new vaccine. I had mine, have you had yours? Wash your hands every time you eat — eat a plant! — be physically active and wear a mask when around someone who is coughing and sneezing.



KATHY KOLASA

Recently, my great-aunt completed her DEXA scan and was diagnosed with osteopenia. How can we best support her so she does not progress to osteoporosis? — QT, Greenville

A Kyajia Mourning and Michael Denning are second- and fourth-year medical students who wanted to explore the relationship between nutrition and bone health throughout life to be able to help their future patients and their own families. Here is their advice to you.

Growing up, our grandmas often said, “Enjoy your youth, because one day growing pains will turn into groaning pains.” As kids, we were often told to drink milk and eat cheese to grow big and strong, showing us early

on how valuable bone health is. Our bones give our bodies structure, protect our organs and help us move. As we get older, it is important to take the right steps to keep our bones strong.

Bones begin to form before we are born and continue until our early to mid-20s. Even after we have stopped growing, our bones are always breaking down and rebuilding. This lifelong process is called “remodeling,” and it helps our bones grow and fixes damage caused by daily activities.

As we age, there are two conditions that older people should know about — osteoporosis and osteopenia. Osteoporosis is a disease where bones have less thickness and poor structure. It makes the bones weak and more likely to break. It is often called a “silent” disease because it

may not be noticed until a fracture occurs. Osteopenia is when bones are weakened but are not yet as weak as in osteoporosis. It is often a warning sign that osteoporosis could happen later.

There are some key nutrients that are important for keeping our bones strong. Calcium is the most important. Our bodies do not make calcium, so we must get it through food or supplements. Not having enough calcium can lead to the body taking it from our bones, which weakens them over time. If you are following a vegan or plant-forward diet, watching and maintaining one’s calcium levels are even more necessary. Normally, women over 50 need 1,200 milligrams each day and men over 50 need 1,000 to 1,200 milligrams.

Some good sources of calcium are fortified orange juice (300 milligrams per cup), fortified plant-based milk such as almond, rice or soy milk (350-400 mg per 8-ounce serving), canned salmon (180 mg per 3-ounce serving) and leafy green vegetables like

kale (90 milligrams per cup) and broccoli (43 milligrams per cup). Since there are only a limited number of foods that deliver calcium and vitamin D, we suggest reading Nutrition Facts Labels to check the vitamins in your meals and add up your intake from meals and snacks. If you notice you are not meeting the recommended amount of calcium and are never in the sunshine, feel free to connect with your health care provider to discuss if you would benefit from calcium or other supplements.

Vitamin D is another important nutrient for bone health. It helps our bodies absorb calcium. It also helps control blood levels of calcium and phosphorus, both needed for making bone. Vitamin D is not naturally found in many foods but can be taken in from fortified milk, fortified cereal and fatty fish. Our bodies can make vitamin D through sunlight exposure, but the amount depends on factors such as time of day, season and skin color.

Protein, the building block of life, is essential

for building and keeping strong bones. It works with calcium and phosphorus to make bones stronger. Some foods that have a lot of protein include lean meats, fish, dairy products, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, quinoa and soy products.

Besides eating the right foods, there are other ways to keep your bones healthy. Weight-bearing activities like brisk walking, jogging, racket sports and dancing are all effective ways to promote bone density.

Regular bone density testing like DEXA scans is also important. A DEXA scan is a quick, painless imaging test. During the scan, you will lie on a table while a low-dose X-ray machine measures your bone strength. It mainly focuses on the spine and hips. The scan takes about 10-20 minutes and is safe, with minimal radiation exposure. Women should begin screening at age 65 (or earlier if there are risk factors) and continue every two years after that.

Bone health is an important part of our quality of life and overall

well-being. There are many helpful resources with tips to make sure you get enough nutrients every day. The Mediterranean diet is good for bone health. It’s full of fruits and vegetables, which are high in vitamin C, and includes lean meats that provide protein. Another great option is the DASH diet. It also has lots of fruits, vegetables and lean meats, plus dairy products, which add more calcium. MyPlate is a useful tool because it offers advice based on your lifestyle and health goals. Many other diets and resources can also help keep your bones strong, and they all focus on eating foods that are rich in calcium and protein.

Choosing the diet that best fits you and staying active and getting regular bone density tests can keep your bones strong and reduce the risk of osteoporosis and other bone-related issues.

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Threats/

Also on Sept. 10 a knife was confiscated at Ayden-Grifton High School in a separate instance. Internal discipline was enacted and no charges were filed. A toy gun was confiscated at Northwest Elementary on Sept. 12. No charges were filed in that instance either, the sheriff’s office said.

The potential threats and investigations came after a Sept. 4 shooting at Apalachee High School outside Atlanta killed two students and two teachers.

Nine other people were injured. The Greenville Police Department said no threats or possible threats of violence have been investigated at schools within its jurisdiction.

A spokesman for Pitt County Schools said that parents of students are notified of all threats but that the means of communication varies. In isolated incidents involving a “very” small number of students in a private setting, parents of the students involved with that threat will be informed “to mitigate campuswide anxiety,” he said.

In other cases messaging is

sent to the entire school community, he said.

Last year saw four incidents of threats or possible threats reported from Aug. 28 to Sept. 15, the district reported.

Pitt County Schools earlier this week updated a school safety policy on the use of threat assessment teams. The district has had threat assessment teams in place since 2018.

Darnell said training for school resource officers is “very comprehensive” and covers the topic of threats on schools. That includes maintaining partnerships with staff and students to identify

potential hazards, he said.

“Many times, reports are incorrect or have simply grown in scope as people pass along the details,” Darnell explained. “Threat assessment teams are utilized, counseling referrals are made when deemed appropriate, enhanced security measures are sometimes implemented and disciplinary action is taken by school administrators along with or in lieu of charges issued by deputies. The responses and actions taken are chosen based on the incident’s specific needs. The focus is on being quick, thorough, fair and, most

importantly, to make sure that each school remains safe.”

The sheriff’s office urges parents to discuss their concerns with their children. Adults who own firearms also should stow them where minors cannot gain access, specifically a gun safe with gun safety locks to prevent discharge, the agency said.

The department reiterated that anyone who sees or hears something suspicious should speak up and report concerns to law enforcement.

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Waste/

Solid Waste and Recycling Department Director John Demary and Deputy Director Jason Russell said Monday the commissioners had three options: negotiate with current operators, Truss Denim Group Co., which manages five sites, and Holden Temporaries, which manages nine sites; seek new proposals; or bring site operations in-house.

Under questioning from the commissioners, Russell said he believes having one contractor operate all 14 sites is the best option.

At \$10 an hour, the total site attendant cost would be \$640,307 annually plus other costs, Russell said. If the commissioners want a \$15 per hour salary, which is the minimum Pitt County employee salary, the site attendant costs would be \$952,307 annually plus other costs.

Under the current contracts for Holden and Truss Denim the county spends \$577,907 on the site attendant costs.

Bringing convenience site operations in-house would require hiring a supervisor along with 29 site attendants plus purchasing a vehicle for the supervisor. That cost would be about \$1.5 million a year which would

equal an approximate increase of \$9.37 in the county’s solid waste fee, Russell said.

The commissioners had questions about requiring contractors to pay \$15 an hour versus the staff-recommended \$10.

Tim Corley, assistant county manager/county engineer, said staff is recommending a \$10-an-hour salary because it can be covered under this year’s solid waste and recycling program revenues.

During Monday’s presentation, Demary and Russell said the county penalized Truss Denim more even though it managed fewer sites. Demary also said staffing issues have prevented his department from conducting constant inspections of the sites.

Commissioner Tom Coulson asked if the other contractor, Holden Temporaries, could take over the other sites. Demary said he believed the company would step in to cover the remainder of the fiscal year, which ends in June.

“We’ve given both of them plenty, ample time to correct the issues,” Demary said. “And they are just not cleaning the materials outside the box ... just a number of (issues). We’ve gone over them a number of times.”

Russell said in one instance a county driver arrived at a Truss Denim Group site at 9 a.m. and there was no attendant. Russell said he called a supervisor who said an attendant had been on site the whole time.

Russell said Holden Temporaries would address problems when notified.

Commissioner Melvin McLawhorn recommended implementing a new plan of action but continuing to work with the current companies.

“If those violations continue, we should start the implementation (of the request for proposal) process ... bringing it down to one contractor for the whole county. I think right now we should keep the two we have in place and monitor the situation and maybe they’ll come up to par,” McLawhorn said.

Other commissioners weren’t convinced.

“If we’ve had this much trouble, why haven’t we terminated that contract yet,” Commissioner Mark Smith, the board chairman, asked.

Demary said he has

previously sought to end the contract but was told to continue working with the company. Both companies currently are working on a month-to-month basis.

“How long do you continue to put up with a poor performance month after month after month,” Smith said.

During the presentation, Russell said the new contract should include language requiring daily patrols of all 14 sites to ensure maintenance rules are being followed; more language on how and why site attendants must safely remove contaminants from recyclables; add site house rules into the contract; require attendants to complete daily opening and closing tasks and require site attendants be paid at least \$10 an hour.

Russell said the new contract language also needs to state the contract will be terminated and rebid if the contractor’s state continues the same violation for five times after one warning.

The board also unanimously approved \$358,218 in contracts to perform asphalt and concrete work at the convenience sites

located at Port Terminal, Ayden, Winterville, Farmville and Stantonsburg. If approved, a contract for \$161,926 would be awarded to Garris Grading and Paving for services at Ayden, Port Terminal and Stantonsburg and a \$163,726 contract would be awarded to Tripp Brothers Construction for services at Farmville and Winterville.

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