

Lifestyle

- ▶ Lifestyle
- ▶ Florabundance
- ▶ Lynn Nalupta
- ▶ Adriane Berg
- ▶ Destinations
- ▶ Best Of
- ▶ Advertisers
- ▶ Have Your Say

No Bones About It

By Patti Verbanas



Women begin losing bone mass at age 18. At age 18! That hardly gives us enough time to figure out the basic tenets of good health — much less start to do something about it.

I learned this alarming fact while researching the **April/May article on ways to prevent osteoporosis** with my physician, John Kripsak, the director of Sports Medicine Services at Somerset Medical Center. “Women know that getting enough calcium and vitamin D is important for bone health,” he told me, “but what many don’t realize is that to truly build bone, they must also incorporate weight-bearing exercises into their weekly program.”

Gulp. Incorporate weight-bearing exercises. I cringed with guilt every time I read and re-read this article. I knew I should be using weights as part of my exercise regimen. A Sagittarian to the core, I prefer outdoor activities — I walk about three miles a day and bike whenever I can — but find that indoor exercise leaves me cold. Sure, I have a jangle of barbells under my bed, and after reading Dr. Kripsak’s words over and over, I was inspired to roll them out and do some regular reps. But I wasn’t committed, and after one week of every-other-day lifting, they went back under the bed to collect more dust. The fact that I did not perform weight-bearing exercises troubled me since I already knew I have several of the risk factors for developing osteoporosis: I am female, Caucasian, and small-boned, plus have a family history of the condition.

When I signed up for health counseling with **NJL H+B blogger Lynn Nalupta**, she asked me to write down my goals. The big one: Join a gym. Now, I decided, was high time. Despite my Sagittarian ways, I was not a stranger to fitness centers. For the past 15 years, I was a member off-and-on. However, since a move two years ago, I had not re-upped in my new location.

Dr. Kripsak’s words gave me the kick I needed, and in February, I visited several area facilities before finding one to suit my needs: current equipment, a variety of classes, pleasant setting that would make me look forward to my sessions, child care, and geographical convenience. If a gym will harmonize with your lifestyle, you are more likely to go — I chose a location just down the road from my son’s Tae Kwon Do academy, which allows me to work out while he is at class. No excuses!

When I joined, I decided that if I was going to do it, I was going to do it right: I signed up for a session with a personal trainer named Shelby to help me design a program to fit my goals. First, she took my vitals: 138 lbs., medium body frame, 67 inches tall, 21.5% body fat, 59% body hydration, and BMI of 21.6 — all excellent, Shelby said. That encouraged me. I had all the pieces; I just needed to fit them together. Next, Shelby gave me a primer on the equipment, fitting me to each machine so that I would receive optimum benefits and not hurt myself. She demonstrated how to properly work with each machine and helped me decipher my ideal starting weights. She also educated me on how I would know that the weights were correct for my ability. “Do two sets of 10 reps,” she said. “The first set should be easy to lift. On the second you should begin to feel a resistance at about the fifth to seventh rep. Once you can do both sets easily, it’s time to increase the weight.”

It's been about two months, and I've seen considerable progress — progress that dovetails with my dedication to visiting the gym three times a week. I have since upgraded my weight strength. In addition, I've been using free weights, incorporating the Bone-Building Resistance Exercise program created by Jennifer Weidemann, an exercise physiologist at Somerset Medical Center Sports Performance and Rehabilitation Center that we published in April/May (also below). And I've involved my children. Three-year-old Selina joins me at the gym, and I use the experience as a teaching tool. She's already learning the importance of exercise and using weights to build strong bones — and in that way, she's light years ahead of where I was, even at 18.

Resistance Exercises for Osteoporosis

Strengthening exercises should be performed two to three times per week. Do the number of sets and repetitions appropriate for your fitness level. Use hand weights of approximately 5 to 15 pounds and ankle weights of approximately 2 to 5 pounds. It's important to select the correct weight for your degree of fitness: If you cannot lift a weight at least eight times with good form, it is too heavy for you. If you can lift a weight more than 10 times, it is too light.

Straight-Leg Raise I Secure ankle weights. Lie on your back. Keeping your stomach muscles tight and left knee bent at a 45-degree angle, tighten the muscles on the front of your right thigh, and then lift your right leg until your right knee is next to left knee. Pause, and then slowly lower until your heel lightly touches the floor. Then, raise again. Do one to two sets of eight to 10 repetitions with each leg.

Straight-Leg Raise II Secure ankle weights. Lie on your stomach. Tighten the muscles on the front of your right thigh, and then lift your right leg until the thigh comes off the floor, tightening buttock muscles. Pause, and then slowly lower until right thigh lightly touches the floor. Then, raise again. Do one to two sets of eight to 10 repetitions with each leg.

Straight-Leg Raise III Secure ankle weights. Lie on your left side (put a pillow under your head for comfort), with your left leg bent at a 45-degree angle and your right leg straight. Tighten the muscles on the front of your right thigh, and then lift your right leg, keeping the toes of your right foot pulled up and pointing forward. Pause, and then slowly lower until your right leg just touches left leg. Do one to two sets of eight to 10 repetitions with each leg.

Straight-Leg Raise IV Secure ankle weights. Lie on your right side (put a pillow under your head for comfort), bend your left knee, and place your left foot in front of your right knee. Keeping your right knee straight, tighten the muscles on the front of your right thigh, and then lift your leg. Be sure to keep the toes of right foot pulled up and facing forward. Pause, and then slowly lower your right leg until your right thigh lightly touches the floor. Do one to two sets of eight to 10 repetitions with each leg.

Push-ups Lie on your stomach. Bend your elbows and place your hands next to your shoulders. Keep your legs straight with your toes pointing down to the floor. Keeping your stomach tight and back straight, push your body off the floor until your elbows are straight. Pause, and then slowly lower to within a few inches of the floor. Perform as many repetitions as you can, building up to 15 repetitions. Do one to two sets.

Weighted Squat Keep your head up, back straight, feet pointed slightly out, and elbows bent with dumbbells at shoulder height and palms facing in toward your body. Squat until your thighs are parallel to the ground. Be sure your knees don't move beyond the tips of your toes. Keep your abdominal muscles tight, and maintain your weight on your heels. Pause, and then slowly straighten your legs by pushing through your heels to straighten knees to the starting position. Do one to two sets of eight to 10 repetitions.

Bent-Over Row Hold a 5 lb. weight in one hand. Place the opposite hand and knee on bench, keeping your back straight. Lift the weight to the side of your chest, keeping elbow close to your body and squeezing back in your shoulder blade. Pause, and then slowly lower to starting position. Do one to two sets of eight to 10 repetitions.

Biceps Curl With a dumbbell in each hand and both arms at your sides, bend your elbows until your lower arm touches your upper arm. Pause, and then slowly lower your arms to starting position. Do not bend your wrists or allow your elbows to come away from your sides as you move. Do one to two sets of eight to 10 repetitions.

Overhead Shoulder Press Stand up straight with your knees slightly bent. Hold dumbbells at shoulder height with palms in and elbows tucked into body. Press to straighten arms overhead, rotating palms forward at end of movement. Pause, and then slowly lower to starting position. Do one to two sets of eight to 10 repetitions.

Abdominal Crunches Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Holding a 5-lb. weight to your chest, push your lower back into the floor, flattening the arch, and hold. Raise your head and shoulder blades

chest, push your lower back into the floor, flattening the arch, and hold. Raise your head and shoulder blades a few inches off floor, keeping your chin tucked in a neutral position. Hold for a count of two and return to starting position. Do one to two sets of 15 to 20 repetitions.

Wrist Curls Sit on a chair and place your elbows and forearms on your thighs; hold a dumbbell in each hand, palms facing up. Keeping your back straight, elbows and forearms on thighs, and wrists just beyond the knee, flex wrists up toward body. Be sure to keep your forearms on your thighs. Pause, and then slowly lower to starting position. Do one to two sets of eight to 10 repetitions.

Wrist Extensions Sit on a chair and place your elbows and forearms on your thighs; hold a dumbbell in each hand, palms down. Keeping your back straight, elbows and forearms on thighs, and wrists just beyond the knee, extend wrists back toward body. Be sure to keep your forearms on your thighs. Pause, and then slowly lower to starting position. Do one to two sets of eight to 10 repetitions.

