

# Children's Health

## Childhood Fractures: Rising Rates, Compound Factors

(NAPSA)—Research suggests that children and adolescents today are more likely to break a bone than their parents were. Experts see low dairy intake, overweight and inactivity as compound risk factors for future fractures, and urge parents to make adequate calcium and physical activity a priority in children's lives.

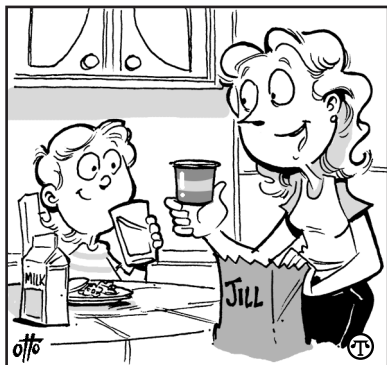
"We know children who avoid dairy products tend to have lower bone mass and more risk of fracture but we're seeing other factors like weight come into play," said Laura K. Bachrach, M.D., Professor of Pediatrics at Stanford Medical Center. "If we don't focus our efforts on improving bone health and maintaining a healthy weight from an early age, our children are likely to miss out on a chance to build the strongest bones they can."

Today, only 12 percent of girls and 32 percent of boys get enough calcium to build bone mass during critical teenage years, according to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, putting them at risk for fractures now and later in life.

"The good news is that we can suggest ways to build stronger bones. The window for building strong bones lasts until early adulthood, but it's never too late to make bone health a priority," said Bachrach.

Bachrach recommends parents provide adequate calcium and vitamin D through nutrient-rich foods whenever possible, rather than turn to supplements. Milk and dairy products provide 70 percent of the calcium in the American diet, as well as other important nutrients such as vitamin D, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium and protein. Dairy Council of California offers simple steps to building a lifetime of strong bones:

- Get active. Play soccer, go for



**Simple lifestyle changes may help reduce fractures and future osteoporosis risk.**

a walk or jump rope. Weight-bearing exercise helps build strong bones. Exercise is also important for maintaining a healthy weight.

- Encourage milk as the beverage choice at lunch. Many schools offer low-fat or fat-free flavored milks that children love.

- Offer cheese and yogurt as bone-building meal components and snack foods.

- Include other calcium-rich foods in your diet such as beans, nuts, corn tortillas and dark-green leafy vegetables.

- Set a good example. Serve milk with at least two meals a day and include milk and dairy products in your own daily choices.

- Find out if nutrition education is part of your child's curriculum. Ideally, nutrition education programs promote healthy foods from all of the food groups as well as daily physical activity.

- Go to [mealsmatter.org](http://mealsmatter.org) to find recipes that include dairy and other nutrient-rich foods. It's a free, interactive, meal-planning and nutrition website sponsored by the Dairy Council of California, staffed by registered dietitians and dedicated to promoting healthy food choices for families.